TAKE ONE

the film magazine

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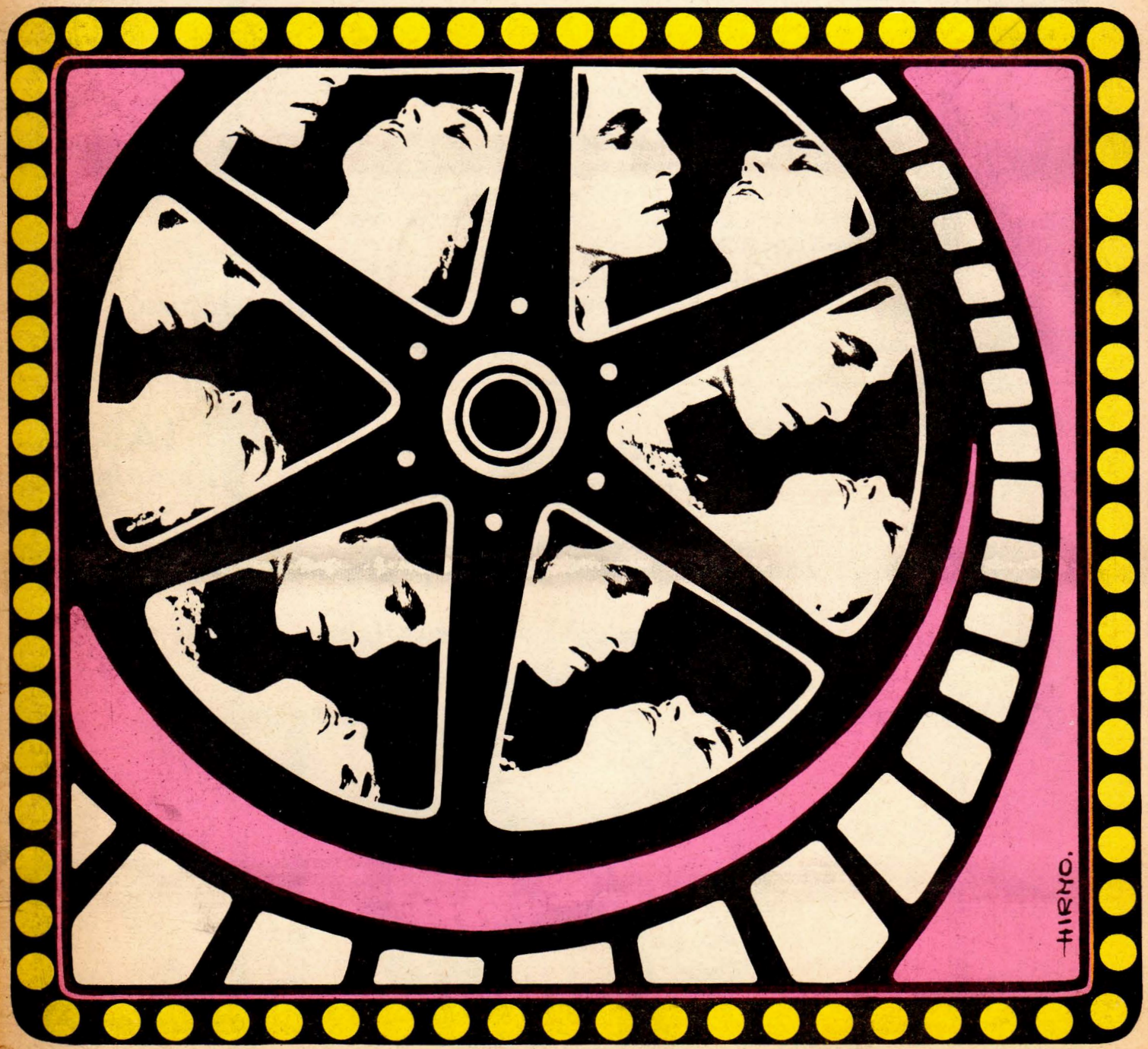

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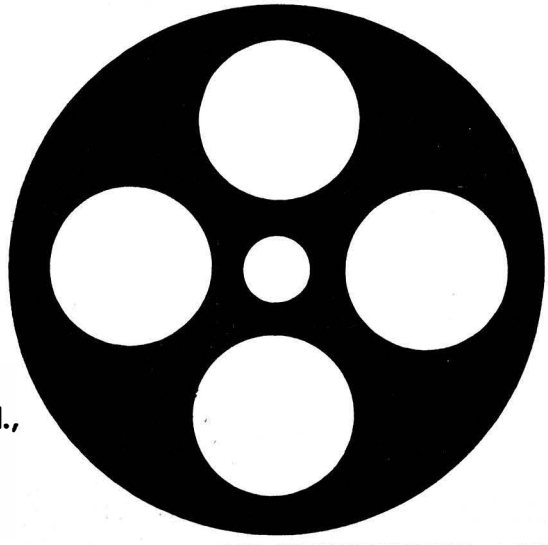

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TAKE ONE

Q and A with Jean Renoir 4

DONNA McDONALD
Dimitrios the Greek 7

GRAHAM FRASER
The Gentle Revolutionary 10

RICHARD BALLENTINE
Yes, Virginia
There Really was a CBC 14

ROBERT RUSSEL
The Next Medium 18

MICHAEL RUBBO
Love and Life
In Children's Films 20

Reviews 23-26

WARRENDALE * Antony Lorraine
PORTRAIT OF JASON * John Hofsess
PRIVILEGE * Bruce Martin
THE WHISPERERS * Clive Denton
HIGH * Patrick MacFadden
THE TRIP * John Hofsess

Departments 27-30

CREDITS
FEED BACK * Our readers
NEW YORK LETTER * Bob Cowan
BOOKS * Jay Cocks
IN THE WORKS
MISC.
CLIVE DENTON ON FILM

COVER BY ANNE HIRMO

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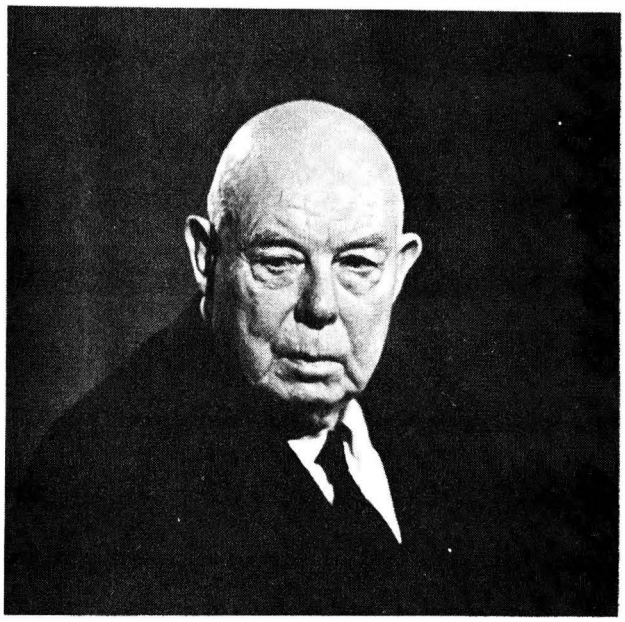
Q & ANSWERS WITH JEAN RENOIR

Interviewed by Peter Svatek, Joe Medjuck and Tony Reif.



BRUNO MASSENET

JEAN RENOIR: Born (the son of painter Auguste Renoir) September 15, 1894. His early films: **La fille de l'eau** (1924), **Nana** (1926), **La petite marchande d'allumettes** (1928), **Tire au flanc** (1928), **La chienne** (1931), **La nuit du carrefour** (1932), **Boudu sauvé des eaux** (1932), **Madame Bovary** (1934), **Toni** (1934), **Le crime de monsieur Lange** (1935), **La vie est à nous** (1936), **Une partie de campagne** (1936), **Les bas-fonds** (1936), **La grande illusion** (1937), **La Marseillaise** (1937), **La bête humaine** (1938), **La règle du jeu** (1939). In 1940, he left for the United States and there directed six films, particularly **The Southerner** (1945) and **Diary of a Chambermaid** (1946). He directed **The River** in India (1950) and **Le carrosse d'or** in Italy (1952) before returning to France for **French-Cancan** (1954), **Eléna et les hommes** (1956), **Le déjeuner sur l'herbe** (1959), **Le testament du docteur Cordelier** (1960), and **Le caporal épinglé** (1962).

T.O.: In all of your films, you have so much sympathy for all of your characters. I wonder if you consider any of the characters in your films villains.

R.: Well, perhaps in the beginning when I'm writing the script. Slowly I discover that the bad one is perhaps very good.

T.O.: So you always find the good nature in even the bad characters.

R.: Yes, I don't believe in villains — I believe that all of us are villains. And we are also all of us good. It depends on the day, it depends on the way we slept during the night, on the quality of the coffee.

T.O.: Do you believe in making moral judgements in your films?

R.: Certainly not. I believe in believing in one general moral judgement — and you carry it with you during your whole life. And perhaps, in your films or in your books or in your paintings, perhaps something of this moral judgement will appear. But it must appear in spite of yourself. I don't believe that you must preach — I'm against it. I may be wrong: you know the opinions I'm expressing now are my own opinions, that doesn't mean that they are right. They are just a way of looking at life, of thinking. Maybe entirely erroneous.

T.O.: Fritz Lang has said that the film maker has a moral obligation to the audience. You don't feel this moral obligation to your audience?

R.: Yes, I feel that we have a moral obligation, but I don't believe that it must be conscious. I believe that some people have a bad influence. But they have a bad influence in everything; in life, with their friends, in film if they make film. And I believe that some other people have a good influence. I believe that some people are, uh, may I say, are creating some peace in spite of themselves, and some other people are creating war in spite of themselves. But I don't believe that it is so conscious. I'm even absolutely convinced that if you want to write a script and to make a picture — you believe in peace and want to make something about peace, preaching for peace — I'm sure that the result will be a good war right away.

T.O.: You have said that about one of your films — that it was a very popular anti-war film but the war still broke out two years later.

R.: (Laughs) Yes, that was **Grande Illusion.** No, I don't believe in moral lessons, I believe in moral examples. And if we think that any censorship is allowed — I'm against any censorship — but if a censorship could be justified, then that should be censorship just against war, against

If any censorship could be justified, that should be censorship against war, against the idea of violence.

even the idea of violence. You know, people make me laugh: they would like sex to be censored. I don't believe that sex ever killed anybody. I believe that sex even brings some joy to many people. After all, we should **encourage** sex. But we should discourage war.

T.O.: You taught at UCLA for a short while, and for a longer period at Berkeley. What did you try to teach your students about direction?

R.: Well, at Berkeley I tried to teach a few ideas about the theatre in general, show business in general. Of course, I used to talk about films, but not so much. I tried to explain to students who were interested in the expression of actors on the screen or on the stage, to teach them how I believe we should get in touch with actors. And I tried to explain a method which I am following very blindly — I know it is a good method because, after all, it was used by some good people like Molière, Shakespeare, Louis Jouvet. In France we call this the Italian method — à l'Italienne, the Italian way. And I'll tell you what was the principle of it. You take your screenplay — or your play, or your book — and you sit down with the actors around a table, and you read it. You read it under only one condition: it is forbidden to give any expression to any word. You must read it as if you were reading the telephone directory: no expression at all. You know that in most theatrical troupes, the actors start right away with the expression. The young girl who has lost her fiancé during the war says "Ohh, my fiancé!" right away. Perhaps it's very wrong, perhaps it's very false. It has been done a thousand times before this girl says it. I believe that if you make a habit of saying "Oh, my poor fiancé has died during the war" in a very flat voice, and you repeat it, perhaps ten times, perhaps a hundred times . . . at a certain moment a little sparkle appears and the actor finds an original expression for this line. Perhaps the actor will say "Oh my fiancé is dead" with a big laugh. Or perhaps she will find the way to say it with a very blank face. Or perhaps something unexpected — but we have a little chance not to be subjected to a cliché. Now, the defect of this method is that you must have a screenplay to do it. And I don't believe in following a screenplay. But I don't think that this matters too much, because you can use the screenplay only for such rehearsals and when you shoot the picture, you modify the screenplay according to what you discover in the actors. And what you discover in the actors is always new, always unexpected. If you follow a preconceived idea you had about the way the actors

For me, the voice and the way you say certain words is a handy indication about how to treat a part.

must act, you have a big chance of following a cliché. But if you shoot according to what you discover at the last minute, you have a chance to do something that has never been done before — a little expression which will be new. And that's important I think.

T.O.: Is this the method you have used in all your films from the beginning, and when did you discover this method?

R.: I discovered this method only with the talking pictures.

T.O.: (Weakly) Yes, of course.

R.: After all, what is the purpose of this reading? It is to discover a character. When Michel Simon and I — you know Michel Simon of course — when we made **Boudu** together we had to find Boudu. We didn't know Boudu. We had to get acquainted with Boudu — Michel Simon and myself, the actor and the director. And we did it with the voice. We read lines, and read lines, and read again. On a good day, Michel arrived at a voice like this (Renoir speaks in a gruff, gravelly voice) — that was Boudu, we had found Boudu. You could discover it with gestures instead of the voice, but for me the voice and the way you say certain words is a handy indication about how to treat the part.

T.O.: What do you think, nowadays, of the films you made in the United States?

R.: Like **The Southerner** for instance? Well, I like them. As a matter of fact, I like my films, not at all because I believe they're good — far from that — but because they remind me of some good moments of work with actors I liked, with technicians I liked; it was very pleasant and it is good to be reminded.

T.O.: You were working recently on a project that wasn't finished. Could you say something about it?

R.: Well, oh, I'm always working on projects. If all my projects had seen the screen, I would have a pile of films higher than the ceiling. I like to work on projects — as a matter of fact, I'm terribly interested in what we call "the making". I think that to write a screenplay is one thing, to shoot the picture is another thing. When the screenplay is finished, it's as if a book was finished — it has nothing to do with the film. It's very useful, it's a good exercise — it's a good, may I say, prologue. It's a help, that's all. But what is important is the making. And, when I finish a treatment of a script, to me it's finished. And, if I like it I like it, and if I make a picture it is a different work which I start. Almost nothing in common.

T.O.: What happens to the screenplay once you start shooting — do you modify it before

the shooting starts — or during the shooting?

R.: I modify it when I'm in touch with the actors and when I see that I could get more from the actors with a different approach, and I modify it during the shooting. I rewrite practically all the scenes during the shooting.

T.O.: Do you change this method in any way when you work in television?

R.: Well, I made only two pictures with the TV method: **Docteur Cordelier** and **Dejeuner sur l'herbe.** For the **Deujeuner sur l'herbe** I rehearsed before and I used this method of improvisation, largely. For **Cordelier** a little less because I did **Cordelier** in a few days and I had no time to use the method.

T.O.: At the time you were making **Cordelier,** you seemed to have a great belief in the future of television, which by some things we've read you seem to have revised since. How has your attitude towards television changed?

R.: Well, I like it very much, it's a fantastic medium. Of course, as a public you miss being isolated, you're too much mixed with the rest of life. On the other hand, during years and centuries the audiences were not so much attracted exclusively by the stage. You know, even up to the nineteenth century — for instance the Italian opera, even in the time of Molière — the important part of the audience was sitting down right on the stage, near the actors. As for the Italian opera, the loges were like little rooms, with another room in the back where they were serving tea, eating sandwiches and pastry, talking. The audience was silent only when an important part of the opera — the big aria by the tenor, for instance — was on stage: then they decided to shut up and to listen. Well, that means we had a very good theatre that was not isolated. Perhaps this is what TV will bring to us — a conception of show business which is more mixed with the fact that you go to the kitchen and prepare your dinner while you are watching **Hamlet.**

T.O.: What is your present project?

R.: Oh, my present project is not ripe. Roughly, it is the study of a female hobo.

T.O.: Much like a female Boudu?

R.: Well, perhaps a female Boudu, acted by Jeanne Moreau; but, I'm not ready.

T.O.: I've heard that you're working on a second novel.

R.: No, I abandoned it. I started, but after I started I didn't find it too interesting — I found it a little dull and I stopped. I have started a book about movies — I'm trying to write a book about the cinéma.

T.O.: Your experiences in making your films?

R.: Yes, the little I learned by making films, and also perhaps some ideas about cinema and the world in general, and a few recollections . . . a few recipes — warning the reader that recipes are always wrong. A good cook doesn't use recipes; he just uses his tongue and his nose.

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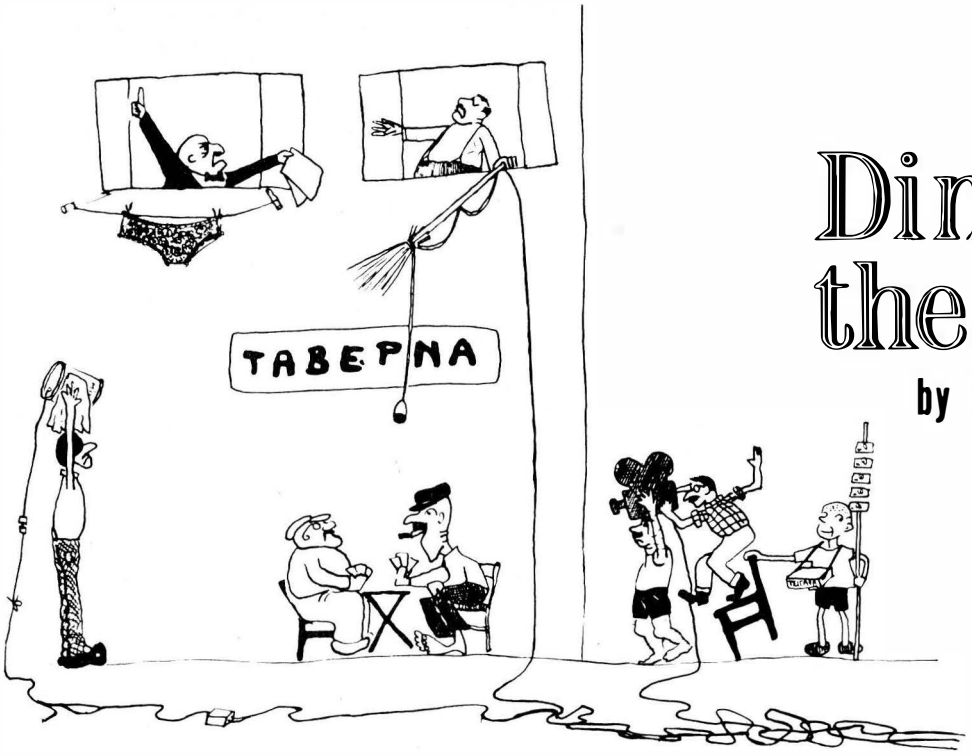

Dimitrios the Greek

by Donna McDonald

Dimitrios the Greek is, in some ways, like his counterpart, Zorba. He will dance in the streets for no apparent reason, then turn bashfully to his North American companions and explain, "Sometimes you can be drunk on happiness." But when Dimitrios dances, Mikis Theodorakis' **Zorba** music does not suddenly appear. Theodorakis is a self-confessed Communist, and his music has been banned in Greece since the April 21 coup.

Dimitrios doesn't have an ouzo, the popular licorice-flavored Greek aperitif, named after him either, but like Zorba, or rather, like Anthony Quinn, Dimitrios is in the movie business — after a fashion.

"My brother," he explained, "works in a cinema on the Third of September Street, and sometimes I help him. You want to meet him?"

The outside foyer of the Hamlet theatre was small and, like similar theatres in the area, crowded with men eagerly examining the sandwich boards displaying Now Showing stills. As always, it was a double bill with the apparently unbeatable combination: one war movie, one sex show.

"This one is called **Concerto for** . . . how you say, in the army, the mechanical guns."

"Machine guns?"

"Yes, **Concerto for Machine Guns.** And the other is called **Vessel of Joy**."

Dimitrios pointed to a still of the young woman I took to be the Vessel of Joy.

"No indecent."

Two strategically placed thumbtacks covered her nipples. Since the coup leaders outlawed the possession of weapons by civilians, the muzzles of guns have been similarly shielded.

Dimitrios laughed. "They're smart here. That one over there is dressed underneath the tacks!"

Inside the theatre, the overwhelming sensation was not the sudden darkness after the bright Aegean sun. It was the smell, a mixture of cigarette smoke, ouzo, and the foul odour of the primitive Turkish john which was not protected by even a door.

A chorus of disapproving shouts rose from the audience. A close-up of a girls' shower room had not been particularly rewarding.

In a doorway at the end of the aisle, I met Giorgos.

"You call me George, in English," he said, and then spoke to Dimitrios in Greek. George needed his brother's help and would I wait for them at the back of the theatre for a few minutes.

The Vessel of Joy was sliding a stocking down one of her long slim legs when I got to the back. Suddenly, the picture disappeared and the lights came on. And up the aisles moved George and his brother, dressed in white jackets and carrying trays.

"Lemonade, orangeade, cheese pies, ouzo," they cried.

Glasses and coins passed back and forth across the rows. When the trays were empty, the lights went off and the Vessel of Joy continued to

remove her stocking. There is always an intermission at a Greek movie, and it never comes when you expect it.

George appeared at my side with a lemonade.

"How did you get started in the theatre?" I asked. (O most trustworthy question in the interviewer's repertoire.)

"I used to be a runner."

"What does a runner do?"

"Well you know how the films come to the theatres in several, what do you call them, wheels."

"Reels."

"In several reels. One theatre shows the first reel, and when it is over, the runner takes it over to the second theatre where the show starts later. Then the runner goes back to the first theatre and gets the second reel and takes it to the second theatre, and takes the first reel over to the third theatre, and then he takes the third reel to the second theatre and the second reel to the third theatre and the first reel back to the first theatre for the next showing.

"One day I had to do four theatres and I was half an hour late by the end. The patrons were very angry. So my boss bought me a bicycle. But I had an accident with the bicycle, so I came to work here."

"Can you suggest any other theatres I should visit, one of the bigger ones?"

George suggested the name of a cinema that wasn't closed for the summer, and also the name of an outdoor one, and Dimitrios and I set off to do the rounds.

Arriving at the indoor theatre early, Dimitrios and I sat at the bar over a Zorba ouzo and some hors d'oeuvres and talked about cinemas outside Athens.

"In the other cities, they are just like Athens, except Athens theatres show more foreign films," he told me. Athens' foreign population is large, and its ranks are swollen in the summer when nearly a million tourists pass through the city. In winter, foreign language films outnumber the Greek 10-1, and in summer, there are virtually no Greek films.

"We Greeks do not have much money to make films," Dimitrios explained. "The best films that are made in Greece are made by foreigners, like the shooting of **Oedipus Rex** in Ioanina now. Christopher Plummer, Orson Welles, Lilli Palmer. The Greeks are the extras.

"It is easy to make a Greek film, though. We could make one right now. You will be the heroine and I will be the hero. Will it be about politics or sex?"

"Let's combine them," I suggested.

"Oh, no, you can't do that," he explained. "In the politics film, I fight for my country against bad politicians or against foreign aggressors. If we have a real fight, it can be against the Turks in the revolution, the Italians from World War II, the Communist guerillas from the civil war or the English in Cyprus. You influence me for the good of my country and the good of my soul. No sex, you see."

"Well, what if we make a film about sex?"

He eyed me up and down.

"No, I don't think you are the type. Besides, it's the titles which are most important in these films. My brother showed some films with very good titles at his theatre this winter. The best ones were **Women Need Beating** and **Karate and the Miniskirt.** And **Spanking Was Born in Paradise."**

I demured to his suggestion that I "wasn't the type," and wondered if we could make a comedy.

He grinned and said it would be easy.

"Boy meets girl. He courts her with songs about the moon and the ache in his heart. Her parents disapprove because the boy is from a different class, doesn't (or sometimes does) have money, or doesn't agree with the father's politics. They have a big argument. Somewhere in the film there is a priest with a good influence.. Everything works out."

"And the boy and the girl live happily ever after?"

"Yes, they both live happily ever after."

The crowd was moving out of the theatre so we bought a programme for two drachmas (about six cents) and gave the usherette two drachmas to show us to seats.

The lights dimmed and the commercials began. Financing for these commercials generally comes from foreign-based companies marketing their products in Greece, while the filming is done locally. The results can hardly be said to be imaginative.

A French-made, Greek-dubbed newsreel recorded last month's news. The feature followed.

Boy met girl. She was courted with the usual Greek songs accompanied by Bouzoukia and guitar. (See any Athens taverna guide for a fuller explanation of the songs.) The father voiced his disapproval.

Shouting erupted from the balcony, followed by laughter throughout the house.

"What did he say?"

" 'Not this damn stuff again! Can't we have anything new?' "

"Do you agree?"

"Yes."

We left.

The Greek Hollywood, as it is called with a commendable show of bravado, was on our route to the open air theatre. This film centre is a block long, and comprises one office building housing directors and a small theatre for showing rushes, several coffee shops, and some outlets for film equipment. It is filled with technicians surrounded by mountains of cameras, film, klieg lights and related paraphernelia. Dozens of motor-

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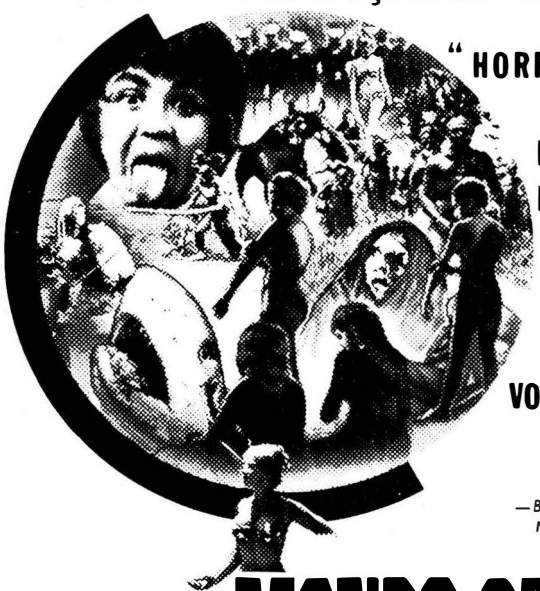

"HORRIFYING, WEIRD, HIDEOUS, BIZARRE, VORACIOUS AND FRANK!"
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cycles with side-cars are stabled in the street, apparently waiting to take the mess of men and equipment "on location," though no one seems to know if, where, or when they will be going "on location." Tight-jeaned youths pace up and down the block and buxom girls blow kisses from windows; knots of intense young men and women stand around discussing "the business" in this communal green room; all of them are waiting to be discovered.

"But if the Greek films are so unpopular in Athens, where do they show them?" I asked Dimitrios.

"In the villages. In their outdoor theatres or the coffee shops."

The village **kafenion** is normally the focal point for meeting friends, gossiping, conducting courtships, discussing politics, and settling business. It is converted to a movie house by the simple expedient of turning off, or blowing out, the lights. A bare wall or a sheet usually serves as screen and the projection room is the back of a vintage truck, equipped with its own generator. The truck is parked in the doorway, and though its mere presence is sufficient advertisement, the villagers are reminded of the impending film by the loud oriental-sounding wail of Macedonian folk music blaring from the truck's loudspeaker. People arrive early and the place fills up quickly. Grandmothers, babies, village elders, merchants and children. Those who can't get in watch through the windows, careful not to obstruct the image beamed through the door. Everyone in the village is there. Except the owner of the rival cafe, who listens to the national radio on his transistor.

The outdoor theatre in the cities is a version of the coffee-shop theatre, without the roof. Its floor is gravel or cement and flat, but one's vision is rarely obstructed because there's a coffee table for every two chairs.

"This is very high class," Dimitrios pointed out, and ordered some ouzo. Certainly I had the impression of being on a patio rather than in a theatre. Geraniums bloomed in flower beds, vines twisted around the lamp posts, and ivy trailed about the screen. The evening air was a pleasant change from the afternoon's theatres'.

On one side of the theatre was an apartment block. The man from third floor front came out on his balcony to watch the crowd, went in when the show started, reappeared at intermission and again at the end. You can only see the same show so many times.

Commercials and another Greek-dubbed newsreel, again with last month's news, preceeded the feature.

And the feature itself was typical of the films shown in Greek theatres: Carlo Ponti's **25 th Hour.**

The GENTLE Revolutionary

BY GRAHAM FRASER

When Jean-Pierre Lefebvre hopped up the steps of the Expo Theatre stage to share the Grand Prix of the 5th Canadian Film Festival before a cheering audience this past August, his friends and admirers felt a tinge of gleeful revenge. It was only two years since his first feature, **Le Révolutionnaire,** had been refused by the selection committee of the festival.

And yet, **Le Révolutionnaire** proved to be a critical cause célèbre; despite its rejection at the 1965 Montreal Film Festival and the French 16mm Festival d'Evian, it attracted considerable attention. The film was highly praised by Wendy Michener in Maclean's and roundly attacked by the revolutionary separatist review Parti Pri. Its growing reputation was such that a year later, at the 1966 Festival, French critics Michel Cournot of Le Nouvel Observateur and Michel Delahaye of Cahiers du Cinéma requested a special showing, and wrote highly enthusiastic reviews of the film.

By then (and certainly by now), Lefebvre was getting a little tired of **Le Révo** controversy; by the time of the 1966 Festival, he had finished shooting **Patricia et Jean-Baptiste,** had started shooting **Mon Oeil,** and was working on the scenario of his fourth feature, **Il Faut Pas Mourir Pour Ca.** At a festival sherry party, he was positively embarrassed by the still-indignant admirers of **Le Révolutionnaire,** and commented self-deprecatingly in an interview that his first real feature would be his fourth — the film which was to win the 1967 Grand Prix.

BRUNO MASSENET

Driving Cournot, Delahaye and myself out to the Film Board screening room for a showing of **Le Révolutionnaire,** Lefebvre bubbled with the enthusiasm, directness and casual charm that has led critics to consistently mention his youth (he turned 26 on August 17th). Talking about the new atmosphere in Quebec, punctuating his remarks with a wave of his hand as he spoke, he commented wryly: "You know, in the last few years, everyone has become convinced that we're sophisticated, cosmopolitan and wise. Hell, we're all still a bunch of lumberjacks! I **know** it, and I say it — and everyone gets angry." Followed by a hearty laugh.

And, in a way, that sums up much of what he has been doing in film. In his three features **(Mon Oeil,** the editing of which has not been finished, will be quite different), he has approached certain intimate aspects of what he feels is the French-Canadian dilemma — its search for identity — and he has personified them with directness and gently self-mocking humour. In **Le Révo,** he showed a group of young men training to be

terrorist revolutionaries under a leader who, despite his obsessive demands of unflinching loyalty, is afraid of revolution and betrays his followers. In **Patricia et Jean-Baptiste,** he showed us a young French-Canadian carpenter and odd-jobber (played by Lefebvre himself), inarticulate and settled in his ways, considered mentally defective by his European employer and quite strange by a lonely French girl (Patricia). In **Il Faut Pas Mourir Pour Ca,** he showed us a wildly eccentric, but quite sweet, young man who, in one day, inherits $10,000, finds that a girl he loved is going to be married, and learns of his mother's death.

Talking to me recently about these films, Lefebvre commented: "I wanted to make films that were very different, that in a way expressed the same thing only in different ways. In a way, **Patricia et Jean-Baptiste** is the same as **Le Révo.** Even in **Il Faut Pas Mourir Pour Ca,** if you take the symbolic aspect of it. The guy who doesn't know what he wants, and then has to face very special events in the same day — well, it is the image of Quebec in a way. We are naive, we look like nothing much, we're crazy . . . and then suddenly we realize today that we have to face problems — and that maybe we have the key to those problems. That's why I caught a lot of people with **Il Faut Pas Mourir;** and it's the same subject as **Le Révolutionnaire** put in different words."

Lefebvre became interested in film while at classical college in Montreal, and organized a ciné-club during his five years there. At the University of Montreal for two years, studying for a Licence ès Lettres, he also worked with the ciné-club, wrote film reviews for the student paper and, in 1960, started writing for the then just-founded Montreal film magazine, Objectif. Graduating from the University of Montreal in 1962, he went to Europe for a year: "I saw films every day for eight months, and then went to Spain and didn't see a film for four months."

Returning to Montreal in the fall of 1963, he taught French at Loyola College ("avec les Jesuites"), started saving money to make a film and, in January, shot a 25-minute film called **l'Homoman,** which was shown at the 1964 Festival. A year later, during Loyola's Christmas holidays, he shot **Le Révolutionnaire.**

Le Révolutionnaire is a very slow, yet gripping, film with an intensity that is at once solemn and hilarious, coming in part from a slow, deliberate rhythm like that of, say, Buster Keaton. A group of young men drive through rural Quebec, armed to the teeth, and arrive at an old Quebec farmhouse. Setting up camp in the farmhouse, they begin training and drilling as guerillas, while the film begins a kind of visual and architectural counterpoint between the obsessive authoritarianism and leader-worship centred on "le chef" and the dark beauty of the farmhouse; gabled roof, fluted window-dressings, weatherbeaten wood against snow, stark trees and fenceposts against white fields. The training slows down, the followers wait, and the leader tightens his grip with gestures of purging the cowardly. A girl comes to the house, later followed by an angry husband — whom the leader orders killed. The intensity of the waiting, of the cold, of the now almost oppressive starkness of the old house grows — broken, at last, by the leader's betrayal of his band. In the final scene, however, a dying guerilla shoots the leader and the federal officers, leaving only the girl — who walks, slowly and enigmatically down the country road away from the farm as the film ends.

In interviews in Cahiers du Cinéma and Objectif, Lefebvre has commented:

> "The film focused completely upon this detail: 'le révolutionnaire' wants to create a revolution, but he is afraid of getting his fingers burned (il a peur de se geler les pieds) . . . I wanted to illustrate something which seems to me to be basic here: a kind of heaviness, a static quality which is as evident in people's thinking as in their lives. (Cahiers, No. 186) . . . **Le Révo** is a film which mixes several genres, which is too sad to be mischievous, too mischievous to be funny, and too flawed to please everyone. (Objectif, No. 35)
>
> "For me, the rhythm of a film is its heartbeat, its breathing, and this corresponds with the essence of the film. If you break that . . . if, for example, I had made a fast-moving, heavily-edited film of **Le Révo,** it wouldn't have been the same film at all, for my own rhythm was heavy and cold."

Lefebvre's speed in shooting **(Le Révo** was shot in 6 1/2 days, **Patricia et Jean-Baptiste** in 9), the un-compromising, demanding nature of his films, and his use of the absurd in **Le Révo** led critics to make facile comparisons with the work of Godard. Pointing out that he only saw **Les Carabiniers** (the Godard film most used by critics for comparison — or implication of imitation) six months after finishing **Le Révolutionnaire,** Lefebvre claims that such comparisons only reveal the superficiality of the critics' analysis of Godard.

"Godard is nervous, he improvises, he likes words. I'm quiet, I'm slow, I don't do any improvisation." He acknowledges no master, no idol among filmmakers, but mentions Renoir, Fellini and Mizoguchi among his favourites. "I feel closer to Japanese than to Occidental cinéastes."

"But", he says, "all my admiration goes to Jerzy Skolimowski **(Walk-Over, The Barrier):**

to me, he represents the cinema of the future."

His favourite films? "When I was young, I was most impressed by **Alexander Nefsky,** even though I don't like Eisenstein," and a mischievous laugh. "When I was older, Renoir's **La Règle du Jeu."** He shrugs, "Oh, all the films by Renoir, all the films by Fellini — I like the progression. They are really 'films d'auteur'."

Talking about his approach to cinema, as a filmmaker and a critic, he pauses and says: "I am not an intellectual, even if I can think. What I am trying to do in cinema is with the heart — to be human. The meaning of my films is not in the dialogue; I don't have any message. I only try to give people a mood, an atmosphere; and when they are in it, I try and bring them with me a bit. . . and make them think and feel. I like to open my film at the end, not close it."

Lefebvre has tremendous admiration for the early comic artists: Chaplin, Keaton, Langdon and others. One can sense their influence in the rhythm of his films: in the tragi-comic absurdity and solemnity of **Le Révolutionnaire;** in the passive and stubborn stoicism of Jean-Baptiste; in the calm but zany eccentricity of Abel in **Il Faut Pas Mourir.** Talking about his conception of cinema, Lefebvre suddenly leans forward:

"There is a scene in Chaplin's **City Lights** which symbolizes what I think cinema should be and should do. Chaplin plays a hobo in love with a blind girl, selling flowers, who doesn't know he exists. He sits on a stone wall, watching her sell flowers to the passers-by. At one point, she sells her last flower to a big-shot and goes to a tap in the wall near where Charlot is sitting, and washes out the bucket. Then she empties it by throwing the water over the wall — and drenches Chaplin. And he cannot, does not, say a word!" Lefebvre, his face alight, gestures to convey the emotional intensity of the dilemma into which the audience is drawn. "I . . . I would like the cinema to resemble that scene. Very funny and, at the same time, tragic."

Patricia et Jean-Baptiste, which Lefebvre shot in March 1966, has much more of the comic than the tragic in it, but can be seen as a kind of personification of Lefebvre's view of the French-Canadian dilemma. Jean-Baptiste, working for a small furniture company, is a passive but stubborn French-Canadian, well settled in "la vie typiquement Québecoise", impassively working to the condescending instructions of a European employer who obviously considers him retarded. He is resentful of the intrusion into his life of the young French girl, Patricia, hired to work in the office, who disturbs this existence — weekends spent reading Allo Police, watching hockey, and drinking beer. The film has little of what one would call plot but, rather, sketches the beginning of a possible relationship between Patricia and Jean-Baptiste.

Lefebvre's fourth film (not counting the still-unfinished **Mon Oeil),** which he predicted would be his "first", is different — but similar.

"Before making **Il Faut Pas Mourir Pour Ca,** people were saying, 'You don't know how to direct people, you don't know how to make them talk — because they talk joual — you don't know how to use a good soundtrack.' So last year I said, 'I'm going to make a film with professional actors, with good dialogue, with a good soundtrack.' And **I succeeded.** And you should see the articles people write now! In twenty lines, they say, 'We like Lefebvre's work, it's well-made, it looks nice.' And at the end they say, 'Well, we don't know why he used that title.' If you don't know why I used that title, it's because you don't understand my film!"

At the risk of rising too determinedly to that challenge, I would say that **Il Faut Pas Mourir Pour Ca,** in its slow, deliberate observation of a not-young-not-old man, living by the endearing gestures of bizarre eccentricity, faced suddenly with the death of his mother and the departure of a girl he loved, shows us a human being who is forced to re-examine what he **should** live and die for.

The film begins with a shot of Abel's comment, scrawled on a blackboard: "I want to change the course of things — but it is things which change me." Like Morgan, Abel is caught up in the absurdity of his own life-style, in the form of his gestures. Unlike Morgan, he is forced to come to grips with his own existence in the context of sanity.

The result of his prise de conscience is not indicated. "I like to open my films at the end, not close them."

To Jean-Pierre Lefebvre, cinema and film-making are almost a physical passion. He works with the conviction that a film is a whole much greater than the sum of all of its parts — and refuses to consider any part, or any aesthetic element, more important than the totality of The Film. "To me, the picture, the image, is not important. It must be perfect because it is not important. When I say that, I could say that the plot, that the actors, that I am not important. It's a . . . a **feeling** —," and his hands express the futility of trying to articulate in words the totality of the cinematic experience. He says that his films are closer to music than to any other art — and, as with music criticism, it is impossible to verbalize the "point" of his films, or the "message." Rather, one must simply attempt to answer the artistic dialogue that he has imposed.

As a cinéaste **and a film critic, Lefebvre is** deeply committed to the future of French-Canadian film. In reply to a question posed by Cahiers du Cinema (No. 176), he wrote: "French-

Canadian cinema, like the French-Canadians themselves, is in search of its originality and its entity. That, in itself, represents its formal and thematic originality. French Canada poses itself the question of its own existence and survival, while English Canada poses itself no questions."

Lefebvre's lack of interest in English Canada is derived mainly from a conviction that English Canada and its film cannot, and has not withstood the pressures of Americanization. He is saddened by Toronto filmmakers' attraction to the New York underground, "first of all because I don't like the New York underground, and also because I find it sad that Toronto is so influenced by it."

His resentment of American values is much deeper than any feeling he may have with regard to English Canada: he claims to be politically neutral. "I take no political options, only poetic options," he says when asked of his convictions concerning revolution in **Le Révolutionnaire.** However, this November he starts production on a film entitled **Comment Gagner la Guerre Contre les Américains.** He calls it "a yé-yé cantata; yé-yé à l'**Alexander Nefsky."** Questioned as to his political neutrality in this film, Lefebvre maintains that he is not being politically anti-American, but culturally so.

"The film is to explore the American way of life, the American way of thinking, even if only to show that our way of thinking in Quebec is different. I'll give you a concrete example. The film is going to be shot in back-screen, which is used a lot in American films — which, to me, expresses a second-rate kind of culture that we cannot accept. One third of the film will be shot in back-screen, and I will **show** that it is on back-screen . . . I won't be politically 'engagé', but culturally I will. I am against that culture; I am against that way of lying — to themselves, and to others."

* * *

Jean-Pierre Lefebvre's commitment to cinema is a total one — and a very personal one. He has said that he lives cinema, and he does so with a remarkable energy and passion. In September, he finished shooting a feature for the National Film Board (possibly the first of four features for TV that he hopes to do for the Board) entitled **Mon Amie Pierrette.** In November, he shoots **Comment Gagner la Guerre Contre les Américains;** in December he hopes to do the second NFB film; and in February, a film called **Parfois.** He has recently signed a general distribution contract: **Patricia, Il Faut Pas Mourir,** and **Mon Oeil** will be subtitled or dubbed and distributed in English Canada.

Is he making money? For nearly five years, he has poured every cent he could get into making films. **Talking** about his most recent contract with the Film Board, his eyes widen: "For the first time in my life someone is paying me to make a film!"

Le Revo

Patricia

Mourir

Mon oeil

Yes, Virginia, there really was a CBC.

–RICHARD BALLENTINE

Dear Grandfather (you say) our history books tell us that once upon a time we had a great big organization that used to give us tele-screen programmes . . . for nothing. It says it was called C.B.C. What is a C.B.C., Granddaddy?

Dear Hippy Grandchildren (I say), first of all you must not confuse the C.B.C. as it is today with what it once was. Even though it is officially a state secret (although a poorly kept one), the C.B.C. does still exist you know. But whereas today it is a large, well-guarded multi-story building somewhere in our nation's capital, filled with doddering (some say aged) government servants, it was not always so. In fact, there was a time, dear children, when the C.B.C. even had cameras, and studios, and microphones. It is true that in 1964 they built the first of their multi-story buildings which had no room for microphones, studios or cameras, but this did not become a policy until much, much later.

You see, young pot-holders, the C.B.C. once was a Force in Our Country with a Four Point Philosophy sometimes known as "The Ouimet Steps to Survival". It is perhaps symbolic that Senior Elder Ouimet did not survive, but passed away peacefully in his 92nd year at his HQ desk, and was given a Full Colour Funeral as befitting a Corporation President who had served (for his last years without a contract, some say) as C.B.C. head for 27 years. Why, there was even a time when the C.B.C. was not of the Establishment.

How do I know (you ask)? Why, I was there. Yes. I was there when it was possible to document the dishonest subscription tactics of Time Inc.; to raise a voice in criticism against the mediaeval serfdom of junior hockey players under the National Hockey League. (My that was a close one.) Why it was even possible to show that a public official lied to the public over a C.B.C. camera, which act resulted in having him removed from office.

And I was there when others documented the real cruelty of our old divorce laws, our unemployment policy, our confused military policy. And I was there, too, when the C.B.C. started spending money in order not to put programmes on the air. Programmes about young children and old politicians . . . about an anti-American Caribbean revolutionary and the pro-American advertising industry. And as fast as these programmes didn't make it, they were replaced by made-in-Hollywood exports. (Oh, sometime I will tell you about Hollywood, young children, when you are older.)

So, you see, gradually everybody left the C.B.C. Some resigned, some were fired, some were not re-hired. Some were simply forgotten by the Personnel Department and accordingly ceased to exist. Until, my children, there was no one left who knew how to operate all those microphones, cameras and studios. Until, in fact, there was no one left who wanted to operate them and they simply rusted away and were not replaced. By then, of course, nobody was watching the C.B.C. anyway. Even the Senior Elder gave up watching the night one of his performers cried on the air.

Not that nobody cared, little diggers. There were quite a few who cared. Some people in the government tried to write a white paper, but they found that by the time they had put the words on the white paper it had turned black and they never succeeded in solving that technological problem. Others tried to arouse public opinion, like the performers' union, but it cost them so much money that they had to raise their dues and then their members had to raise the minimum scale and gradually the whole thing became so expensive that actors were replaced by animated characters and Spaniards. Others of your ancestors tried to save what the C.B.C. had done in the past, great golden days, and asked for permission to go into the archive vaults and pick the best of the old programmes and films. But the vaults had been paved over as executive parking garages and all the old tapes and films had been used to keep the heating bill down, and thus the C.B.C. on budget, for one year.

It was, little sun-worshippers, that very budget that proved to be the threshold to C.B.C.'s greatest success. You see, there came a time when the C.B.C. spent all its money before their fiscal year was half-over. It was, I seem to recall, in the year of the first Centennial of our nation. The C.B.C. spent all its money before the festivities were over and had none left to cover the Queen or the General when they came to visit. (The General was sort of like a Queen, but not exactly.) So the elders held a council meeting and another and another and another and eventually they made a decision. They would stop all their spending and save whatever few dollars they could to cover the visits of the Queen and the General.

Then, my young protesters, the elders found a miraculous thing had happened. They found that all their worries and their tensions had disappeared. For the first time in years the Executive Offices were quiet and peaceful and pleasant. For the first time they could look about them and appreciate the beauty of their marble desks and broadloomed walls and the comfort of the Executive Dining Room. They spent many hours analyzing and discussing this strange occurrence. They put their whole Research Department onto it.

After days and weeks of intense labour, the Research Department came up with a well developed study of this sudden onslaught of peace and calm. The study was supported by 175 pages of documents and arguments and in brief, I am told, it's conclusion went like this. The peace and calm had occurred because at last the C.B.C. had reached that goal dear to all managements since time immemorial . . . the goal of Perfect Organization. It was not until the final page of the research report, I am assured by someone who was there, that the reason for this miraculous occurrence was stated — as a footnote, of course — and unfortunately few of the elders ever got to the last page.

It was felt for a while by a militant wing of the Council of Elders that they should shout to all the world of their success and in fact even invite other, less fortunate, Elders from other Councils to visit and study the miracle that they had wrought. But in discussion it was argued, and successfully so it turned out, that to invite others to see Utopia in action would only upset the delicate balance of pressures they had achieved and then, of course, what the people had been invited to study would no longer exist. (This position was most effectively put forward by a University Graduate who majored in Anthropology before going into Advertising in Toronto. He pointed out that the last primitive society on earth had been studied under a grant from the Ford Foundation and at the end of three years had been so contaminated by the research team that Coca Cola was able to build a thriving bottling plant in the area the very next year.) This fact carried the day and the C.B.C. Elders made their decision which has never been rescinded to this day. No outside influences were to be sought; in fact, none would be allowed to enter the hallowed halls. Guards were hired; maps were altered and ivy was allowed to grow unchecked, until today only three people, other than those who work there, know where the C.B.C. head office is.

Yes, Virginia, you and your little friends are right. There was a C.B.C. and . . . oh, what's that you ask? What was on the last page of the Research Report? The real cause of the miracle? Why it was a very simple cause. Very simple, indeed. You see, the C.B.C. had completely ceased producing tele-screen programmes. They did absolutely nothing at all. And that is why their management was so beautifully organized, And, my little chickadees, that is why we all became film-makers.

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THE NEXT MEDIUM

by ROBERT RUSSEL

5. EVR

Since the announcement about the Electronic Video Recording cartridges first appeared in London and New York, I've been watching the newspapers and journals for some informed speculation or comment. With the exception of Jack Gould of the New York Times, the science and communications writers have let the story pass. Since the EVR system promises to reduce the cost of Videotape by a factor of fifty, and the cost of film by one of approximately fifteen, as well as seriously undercutting the cost of print on paper, bringing the next medium dramatically closer, the silence implies fear or blindness or both. Let's look.

There are three elements to the EVR cartridge system: the cartridge itself, the printing system, and the player. Briefly, the CBS system records a quality image onto a special film in a plant designed for mass-production, the first of which is already abuilding outside London. The film is stored in 1500-foot rolls inside 7"-diameter cartridges, a half-inch thick, which will play an hour's program (black and white) on a home television set through a small player which sits on top of the set and plugs onto the antenna terminals. The image may be a film, a television program, a series of instructional sequences, or (presumably) around 100,000 discreet images of text or illustration, any one of which may be selected for study. The cartridges will be marketed for $7.50 to $15 each, the players for $300.

The truly devastating aspect of the system, it seems to me, is not the remarkable mechanical technology for handling the film, but the film recording process itself: The drastic reduction in costs implied will revolutionize the economics of information transfer, television and film, to the point where the individual can have, at hand and at home and easily playable, almost anything he wants on film or in print. In effect, this begins to take the control of film and television and educational programs out of the hands of the distributor, broadcaster, exhibitor or educator, and puts it where it belongs: under the control of the individual. At last he can do what he wants at his own convenience: teach himself, inform himself, entertain himself (and perhaps even degrade himself, as the system would lend itself admirably to the dissemination of pornography).

Ordinary film techniques don't lend themselves to reduction. If you projected an 8mm film alongside a 35 or 70mm film in the same theatre, you'd see the differences immediately. The definition is delicious in the big format; in the 8mm film you'd be immediately conscious of the grain, as though the image were made of black and white mice scurrying across the screen. In recent years, the computer people have been working on other types of optical storage, with considerable success. The most impressive of these developments comes from National Cash Register, who use a helium-neon laser beam to record an image on the evaporated metal coating on a thin film. The film is grain-free, and the reductions are of the order of 250 to one: that is, a standard typewritten page of text can be reduced to a dot about a thirty-second of an inch wide. This process, which NCR is now marketing commercially, can record 2000 pages of text on a single card four-by-six inches. The size of enlargements from these microdots are limited only by the optical system of the reproducer. Since this heat-mode printing is instantaneous, requiring no processing or developing, processing times and costs are dramatically reduced. (See SCIENCE, 23 Dec. 66, 1550ff.)

Jack Gould has been speculating on the entertainment implications of the EVR system. He feels that the TV viewer will be pleased to buy old films and TV programs for something around the price of an LP record or two, which he will presumably play over and over again. As an executive of the Cinémathèque Canadienne, where old films are offered to what appears to be a severely limited audience, I am not yet convinced that the general public will want to see old favourites that many times at home. It may prove more interesting to offer special events on EVR, such as Opera or Theatre performances, or Music Hall recordings or Night Club shows, than old movies which are otherwise available on the Late Show. But I can certainly imagine forking out ten dollars for The Best of Ed Sullivan, and perhaps even The Best of Seven Days. And certainly, The Best of Lenny Bruce.

The most promising use of the system, it seems to me, is in the field of education — in school and in the home. At the moment, there is a large and growing market for 8mm film-loops. These are four to seven-minute films in cartridges, which plug into small viewers about the size of a TV screen. The film usually illustrates a single concept, and is designed to be played over and over until the concept is clear. A cartridge costs about $15 to $25, depending on the company which puts them

out. Assuming the EVR cartridge holds fifteen times as much film, and costs about half the price, the price advantage is from fifteen to thirty times that of the film-loop cartridge now being successfully marketed. Teachers and pupils should find the greatly extended length a real convenience, and the greatly reduced cost a real inducement toward building an extensive collection.

Since the system plays through a TV set, any classroom with a $300 investment in a set would be induced to invest a further $300 in the player. In addition to receiving ETV programs from the air, they will be able to tap the school's library of EVR cartridges for programs and single-concept material at their convenience. Teachers who don't like the idea of adjusting their teaching schedules to that of the central ETV schedule, will be able to make up their own schedules to suit their class and their own style. In addition, they'll be able to stop the program at any moment to bring out a point, ask questions, or even replay a complex sequence. They'll be able to review the lesson on film before class, and thus won't have the fear that they'll be surprised or contradicted by a program they haven't seen in advance over the air. Thus they'll be able to build the program into their lesson in their most effective manner. Students who have been absent from class can catch up easily; and the program is there (perhaps in the library, where students can consult it on their own time) for review as exams approach. Bright students can broaden their studies with EVR, while the rest of the class catches up. The economics are such that, while ETV stations in large centres can distribute programs cheaper than EVR cartridges, in the hinterlands, where schools are spread far apart, EVR may prove a considerably more economical system than building microwaves and transmitters. This is an important factor at a time when the Provinces and the Federal Government are actively considering the establishment of ETV networks.

But the most portentous advantage of the EVR system lies in the area of what the French call Permanent Education. Here we can see groups of professionals, such as doctors, nurses, teachers, lawyers already anxious to keep up with sweeping developments in their fields. An EVR system would permit a doctor, for instance, to keep up with the latest techniques, and to consult his cartridge library when a particular treatment was to be undertaken. A teacher could explore new curricula developments at her leisure, or study new teaching techniques, perhaps for academic credit. Once installed and paid for, the $300 players can be used for continuing the life-long process of education on both a formal and informal basis. Despite the silence in the press on EVR, many educators are already knocking on the doors of the CBS Laboratories for more precise information about the true costs and modalities of the process.

Even less information is available from CBS about the "information retrieval" aspects of the system. Peter Goldmark, in announcing the system at the end of August, stated that one cartridge would hold all of the pages of a complete set of the Encyclopedia Britannica, each of which may be selected and consulted separately. Here it is difficult to understand the meaning of the claim. My television set won't resolve more than 8 or 10 short lines of large type. A page from an encyclopedia would appear as a blur of grey. If the system is to be used for the storage of print as well as image, the text will have to be specially designed for TV, or we will have to own special high-definition television sets (1000 lines or more) to be able to read what the film is obviously capable of recording. But even with these limitations, the ability to store around a hundred thousand pages in an inexpensive film cartridge could be enormously useful. If a small computer system could permit us to select pre-coded pages at random from the cartridge, then each of us could have our own living encyclopedia in our own home, for much less than the cost of a good printed set, and have it updated each month as new information develops.

The same logic which would allow us to select at random any item from our EVR encyclopedia, would also permit the preparation of sophisticated program-learning systems. Several dozen learning sequences could be recorded on a single cartridge. At the end of each, the viewer is asked to reply to a question. His answer, right or wrong, sends the film through the cartridge to an appropriate sequence. Such a system, once the logic and mechanics were perfected, would turn the home or school TV set into a relatively inexpensive teaching machine comparable to the extremely high cost Computer Assisted Instruction systems now being introduced into American schools. Thus the addition of logic and mechanics to the system as announced seems to me to be a sensible and economic next step. There has been a good deal of talk among computer thinkers about the advantages of microfilm over magnetic tape for computer memories: this dramatic breakthrough in film costs may weigh heavily in the debate.

With this logical extension of EVR, we are back concretely in the domain of the next medium. For it seems to me that the next medium implies two things: the information must be available to the individual and under his control, and (further) the system should be responsive to him, interreact with him, modify its program in line with his individual responses, personality and understanding. In this way, we see Technology serving the individual, rather than dehumanizing him. And the "commie", the home communicator, becomes as much a part and extension of his life as the four-speed gear box and the telephone.

Love and life in CHILDREN'S FILMS

by Michael Rubbo

Look at a film for children and you'll see how protected from reality in all it's forms children are today. The very fact that there are things called children's films is evidence of this protection. But now look at a Breughel painting and you won't see any children — only little people. Children in those days dressed as did adults. They played the same games. They saw their parents having intercourse, and had sickness and death all around them. If there had been film at that time, I doubt there would have been any children's films. Of course, the unformed body and it's limitations was acknowledged, and so children were not expected to fight in wars until they were twelve or thirteen. But nobody gave much thought to the unformed mind. That is, until education became general, by which time adults had found a great new game called moulding children. A further refinement was the Humanists' discovery of the innocence of childhood. The adult world was corrupt, but children were by nature good and innocent of corruption. Hence they had to be protected from the adult world. And so a screen was erected around children. Children's films are a part of that screen. Perhaps this is all for the good. Don't let them grow up too fast, we are apt to say and leave it at that.

But why let children's films off so easily? What are they really up to; what makes them the way they are? Generally, children's films are selective. But the films of different countries tend to select different things for the children of that country to see. **So by looking at the children's films of a country, you get some idea of the hang-ups of its adults.** Here are a few biases unearthed in comparing English and Czech live-action children's features. The comparison is an interesting one, because both countries go about the business of making children's features quite diligently. In Czechoslovakia these films come in the main from the studio at Gottwaldov. While in England the Children's Film Foundation (a non-profit organization) hijacks first rate talent from the industry at large to make some twenty children's features a year.

In both countries, these films are screened at special children's shows — something of a rarity in Canada — in England every Saturday morning at the local theatre (where, somehow or other, the films get squeezed in between birthday announcements, prize-givings, and pet shows). There's loud appreciation for the things the kids like, and **during boring films extensive lolly throwing is the rule.** No adults, except for a handful of supervisors. What sort of films would you see, if they'd let you in? Well, firstly the film may easily be up to ten years old, for children's features have an incredibly long life in England, if they are any good at all. Superficially, you'd call them action-adventure pictures, but after seeing half a dozen or so, a more definitive pattern emerges. The stories are based on the fact that children in England do, or did, live in a rather authoritarian world. The adult, the parent, the teacher, is very much the boss, and the child knows that he is going to be managed and controlled until quite a late age. The escape point comes later in life for the English child than it does for the North American one. He accepts this tyranny because that's the way things are, or were, but in his entertainment he likes to see the tables turned — or, at least, the makers of these films gather from their reception that he likes to see the tables turned. The genre is now very finely worked out. Here's how the plots run:

A gang of tousle-haired kids, our goodies, accidentally stumble on the activities of a small crime ring, the baddies. The ring is probably busy stealing bikes, dogs, or robbing one of the smaller London banks. Perhaps they know that the kids are on to them, but why worry, who's going to take any notice of a bunch of children. The baddies are right of course. For when the heroes take their discovery to the overworked inspector of police, who is hurriedly downing another cup of tea, he is far too busy to listen, and sends them away with some advice on keeping their noses out of big people's business.

Now for the turning of the tables! The kids know they are right, and after showing incredible ingenuity, in the face of general adult stupidity, trap the crooks in a cellar, a disused coal mine, or the back of a van. Finally the inspector and his men arrive, and it turns out that they have been pursuing the same gang in quite the wrong direction. So the clever children get a citation, a brand new bike, or a day by the sea, and the whole thing ends with the feeling that everything would be all right if kids were running the world.

This business of beating adults at their own game could promote a certain anarchy among children perhaps, if in these films, they triumphed over their real antagonists in life: their teachers and their parents (not to say, of course, that parents and teachers are always antagonists; there are exceptions). But you can be sure they never do. They are only allowed to put down those adults already beyond the pale — dog-snatchers, for instance; humorous and not very dangerous dog-snatchers usually. **It would be unthinkable to show children getting the better of an unpleasant teacher,** as did Jean Vigo (in his memorable **Zero for Conduct).**

Now Czech filmmakers have very different ideas about what their children want, or should see. In a nutshell, their films are about the special world of children, and this world, they say over and over again, has little in common with the adult world. But judge for yourself whether they get into the life of children as it really is. Their hang-up is a variation of the innocence idea. For them the special, valuable thing that children have is imagination. **Adults, they say, are by and large routinized and deadened bureaucrats.** They are incapable of the flights of fancy that children practice all the time. It is not just that adults control children, say the Czechs, but that they deaden them, since adults are dominated by the reality principle. So one finds almost an idolization of childhood in these films. The plots go round and round the same theme. It can be stated symbolically; Some beautiful flowers grow in an inhospitable stony place. People come along, they step on the flowers, they pick them, they plan to erect some hideous functional structure where the flowers grow. In other words, they give those flowers hell. Then at last along comes a child, and the child knows what the flowers are really for. They are to be enjoyed, to be admired, to be loved, and all this he does. The story ends with the battered flowers coming back to life, saved by a child's sensitivity and imagination.

They are very pessimistic in a way, these Czech films, for they seem to be saying that the only way out is to go back into childhood. Yet really their view of childhood is just as specialized, and perhaps just as distorted as that of the English filmmakers. The English do have fantasy films. But they seem to me to be essentially different. The odd monster is discovered, and science-fictiony things do happen, but all is explained logically at the end. All is made to conform to the reality principle. The film's tension rests in the fact, not that the children are thwarted in their fantasy, as in the Czech films, but rather that they are not believed.

In English films there is usually a gang which collectively gets in and out of scrapes. The Czechs, on the other hand, are more apt to develop the individual personality of their characters. In two films I saw in Prague, the hero was an outsider, someone who was different, and each film was a story of a personal, lonely struggle in which the hero either did not have any friends in evidence, or was actually persecuted by other kids. One I remember gets us into the interesting question of animals in children's films. It opens with a farm boy of about twelve coming across a hunter shooting ducks from a blind. The ducks fall centre frame, one after another, shattered and twitching. At first one thinks that the boy watches with horror, but then with a half smile he accepts some feathers as a trophy from the hunter. The ambiguity one feels about the boy's response carries right through the film. In the barn of his father's farm he has a small zoo — perhaps twenty wild animals and birds in cages. He obviously loves them and cares for them well, and yet there is a feeling of cruelty about their confinement. These feelings become concentrated in one animal, a wild fawn that he has discovered drinking beside a forest pool. He goes morning after morning to the pool, hoping to be able to catch the fawn. But each time it eludes him. Finally, after much anguish, he takes his father's gun and, from an ambush, shoots the fawn as it comes to drink. He is heartbroken by what he has done, and significantly, is found and led gently home by a game warden who the day before conducted a rampage of hunting and killing through the same forest. This is pretty strong stuff. I could hardly believe that it was a "children's film" but it is shown as such.

What about this love of animals, which is supposed to be a universal theme in children's films? In this case, it was not so much a love of animals I was watching displayed, as a love of power over animals. **Animals in children's films are made to act as a sort of soft lower order for children.** The child takes out on the animal what the adult takes out on the child. It's quite O.K. to show kids training animals, rewarding them, punishing them, driving the poor creatures to distraction with love and attention. All this seems to be considered a fine outlet for the child's frustration, one that doesn't threaten the adult position at all.

Animals are also important because they

are toucheable, while children themselves are not, at least not in the world of children's films. If you look into a school-yard what do you see? You see that children are very physical in their relations with each other. **Whether you want to call it polymorphous sexuality or just play, the fact remains that there is a lot of touching going on.** There will be a few playful fights in evidence. Buddies will be hanging on each other's shoulders. One kid will be trying to trip another, and some of the girls will be holding hands. All in all a lot of body contact will be visible, but somehow this embarrasses adults and you rarely see it in children's films. For adults it has sexual overtones, and therefore they keep it out.

The result is that most communication in film is done with words, whereas in reality kids communicate as much with the body as with speech. Hence the films seem stilted and standoffish. Not only is touch between child and child taboo, but one has to be very careful how an adult touches a child and vice versa. We may actually have quite an extended set of communications worked out without knowing it. **Take, for example, that lovely piece of work, The Sound of Music.** The littlest girl gets cuddled and fondled with abandon. The older girls tend to be compulsively embraced in times of anxiety. The boys get nothing at all, except the quickest pat on the cheek, and perhaps an outstretched hand during a playful dance across the alpine meadows. In other words, the touching order is worked out to the finest nuance, and nothing that could suggest any sort of body consciousness is allowed to muddy things up. Thus adults build their repressions into a film which I suppose was meant for children.

But animals may be thoroughly and continually touched, so forming a substitute acceptable to adult sensibilities. In this way a little physical warmth gets into films which would otherwise seem terribly cold.

So what sort of children's films should we have (correction: should the children have)? Maybe we should try asking the children more often, and in the meantime (till we get an answer) let's not be so scared of the physical thing. We could quite easily have a little more body consciousness without going back to Breughel. (After all we've made a lot of progress since then: "children" don't have to go to war until they are eighteen now.) Animals should stay, both as their charming selves and as instructors. By this I mean that animal tales do seem to inform children about human nature and its characteristics at a time in life when the adult world above is just one great blur. This is what fables have been doing so well since the beginning. I'm confident too that the children will want to let fantasy stay, if it really is their sort of fantasy and not just the whimsical stuff that makes adults feel good.

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WARRENDALE

Produced and directed by Allan King for the CBC. Photography: Bill Brayne; Sound: Russ Heise; Editing: Peter Moseley. With Tony, Irene, Carol, Robert, Lori, Patrick, Pegi, Davey, Debbie, Freddie, Susan and Bob; Terry Adler and Walter Gunn; John Brown and Martin Fischer.

Warrendale: a film as violently open in its emotion as John Brown's treatment staff strive to make it for the children; a film which blows one's own ego centre, bang, yet finally safely containing you in the auditorium arm chair, confronted only by the image of yourself?

The film: smooth panning shot over Toronto suburbs onto rectangular buildings: Warrendale. Withdraw and fast zoom into This is Warrendale, treatment centre for emotionally disturbed children: these are the children, their house mother, Terry Adler, and Walter Gunn. This is a holding. Mr. Brown, blowing another holding; Dr. Fischer, Tony playing, and another holding; the cook dies.

John Brown's primary objective at Warrendale is to liberate emotionally disturbed children from the repressions which are the birthright of our culture. For instance, the deliberate shutting off of channels of communication is a self-destructive act; because Carol does this the staff scream at her. They will not allow her to withdraw into a shell of self-depression; they engage her first verbally and then they hold or contain her physically. Constantly, the attempt is made to communicate the concern and love of one human being for another, and so gradually to instil the confidence to relate normally to other people. John Brown's treatment theory is as simple as his belief that "a communication of touch cannot be distorted in the same way that verbal communication can be distorted."

"Communication of touch" generally means the holding of a child who has blown, but equally it extends through the range of human intercourse. Allan King becomes hung up over the obvious interpersonal physical holding sessions. He shows us plenty of them; almost to the exclusion of demonstrating the natural organization of each house and spontaneous group activity sessions.

These holding sessions are faithfully recorded. The three man camera crew, accepted within the environment, are usually working just six or seven feet from the subject. But the resulting image is lifeless. The film functions from a single continued perspective while one knows that the incidents photographed are alive with diversity and spontaneity. The film-story works out this linearity tidily, hitching itself around the death of the cook Dorothy. This gives us the feel of the well-made play. The camera style of Bill Brayne is restrained and simply descriptive: The necessary juggling of action to focus the death and support the children's reaction to it is the major creative change made in the production of the film as a feature rather than a documentary. But to me, the result falls between the two, not achieving anything new and complete and at the same time denying and destroying the sacrosanct quality of the original actions and their relationship to that primary element of the children's development: time. Rather than present the fairly loose free-running original sequence, Allan King has thought it better to reorganize and so tighten his material. In so doing he encompasses what he and we already know but passes up the opportunity of presenting something new, outside our everyday life: as is the warmth and openness of expression that John Brown tries to have the children express.

No one of us is without our hang-ups. All the staff become very personally involved with the children. "There is no way to communicate with another human being without bringing yourself into it." But the film fails to do this in terms of the audience; from the first aerial shot its aspect is that of a voyeur. We never see the children with sympathy, and subsequently the film never engages us. We are never brought subjectively into the realm of the screen image.

Peter Goldman's **Echoes of Silence,** for instance, does this. Through camera perspective, relationship and editing rhythm he penetrates the consciousness of his image. At the moment of climax he may again and again restrain his camera and present another tableau, but the audience can always be fully with the extent of an emotion presented. On the other hand Tony reacts coyly to Brayne's camera, which rarely cuts through our own insufficiencies of perception to make us see the emotional forces working in the children. For example: a long shot of a group playing cards. One of the boys is accused of cheating, for a moment this puts him up tight. But in the film no attempt is made to make this a recognizable incident or emotion. It need only be hands, cards and faces, with dialogue over. As a document of what the boy felt: of a common problem faced and resolved at Warrendale the sequence falls flat. It shows us the scene distantly and impersonally: dehumanized, which is precisely the aspect of contemporary culture that John Brown is fighting against. Constantly this is the problem; the film does not touch us, we never seem to see the veracity of the photographed situation.

The insufficiencies of the film, **Warrendale,** must be spoken of for the same reasons that for a few this treatment centre, Warrendale, has spoken against the dehumanization of our culture. This film won a prize at Cannes, but as documentary, **Vali** is a more expressive recreation of a situation, and **Echoes of Silence** a more acute document of the emotional blockage of our times.

For the award, for what was produced by the CBC and Allan King, and for whatever the film achieves in passing on the knowledge of this type of treatment, we may be thankful. But do not let us pretend this is sufficient use of the cinema as document or as creative medium. For its so called frankness (In allowing use of the word "fuck".-Ed.) we have denied the film the right to be shown over the national television service, we have replaced John Brown and his staff with government accepted psychiatric workers and we have heralded as a film of integrity and power a piece still shackled by the inhumanity and limpidity of the culture from which it comes.

Antony Lorraine

PORTRAIT OF JASON

Producer and Director: Shirley Clarke. Photography: Jeri Sapanen. Sound: Francis Daniel. Cast: Jason Holliday. 105 minutes. Distributed by the Filmmakers' Distribution Center, New York.

Shirley Clarke's new film, **Portrait of Jason,** is the kind of film that makes you wish that all others incapable of truth would at least shut up. At a time when Hollywood offers us Sidney Poitier as token representation of the negro in films (a stereotype so limited in human attributes that monotype seems the more appropriate term), Miss Clarke cooly gives us Jason; petty thief, psychopathic liar and prostitute. He is not a symbol, but virtually unique and agonizingly real: Miss Clarke doesn't manipulate his life story into tragedy or comedy, nor any other theatrical formula. The film consists of a series of interviews in which no greater honesty on film is imaginable.

The audience, and Jason, are always at 6's and 7's. We watch him patently trying to solicit pity (Jason's finest put-ones are his hard-luck stories) through techniques that steel us against him; at other times, in moments of sheer bravado, vainly discussing his talents and future as an "entertainer", when he most expects applause, pity becomes an appropriate response. Miss Clarke shows us how Jason relates to us, and how he differs, and one must admit of Jason's performance as himself that a life which would otherwise have been scorned or ignored has been given meaning and imperishability through Miss Clarke's work.

Various claims will be put forward on behalf of other aspects of this film, but I regard the most salient feature of **Portrait of Jason** to be this: It is the new mark of honesty in cinema, and a film by which all others will hereafter be judged.

John Hofsess

PRIVILEGE

Producer: John Heyman. Director: Peter Watkins. Co-producer: John Beard. Director of Photography: Peter Suschitsky, Art Director: Bill Brodie. Costume Designer: Vanessa Clarke. Cast: Paul Jones, Jean Shrimpton, Mark London, Max Bacon, Jeremy Child, Harry Davies. A Universal release, in Technicolor.

Story: In the near future, British establishment organisations — State, Church and big business — use a pop singer, Steven Shorter, to manipulate the nation's young people.

Peter Watkins' first three motion pictures, **Forgotten Faces** (an amateur film), **Culloden** (which he made for BBC), and **The War Game** (which he made for the same organisation), comprise a series of ascending successes. **Forgotten Faces** came from nowhere to win an award in the British "Ten Best" amateur movie competition. **Culloden,** semi-documentary recreation of Charles Edward Stuart's catastrophic defeat in 1746, was shown all over the world. And **The War Game** won innumerable awards, including an Oscar. However, as surely everyone now knows, it was thumbsdowned by the BBC. Despite demands to the contrary, it has not been shown on television. And its opportunity to galvanise a nation — which was its undoubted function — has been denied it. Instead, it has dribbled away its evangelical potential on theatrical audiences of a few hundred here and a few hundred there.

Watkins' first two films are deeply concerned with the violence of war; they are intense and personal. In **Culloden,** he changes a dark, romantic, historical event into a fusillade of bone-splintering, blood-letting images that have almost intolerable immediacy. But beside **The War Game, Culloden** is merely academic. **The War Game** addresses itself directly and specifically to the British televiewer. It tells him that nuclear war means the end of Britain; that if this doesn't please him then he should make the government, **his** government, change its nuclear policy. Far from expressing contempt for "the masses", as a New York critic has claimed, **The War Game** appeals to them, it places its faith in them, it tells them they are the people who are going to suffer and it tells them that it is they who must make Her Majesty's Government alter its strategies of war and defence.

One can only guess what might have happened had this rallying call been delivered and heard. It was not, of course. The film Kenneth Tynan claimed might be the most important ever made was stifled. And the ensuing controversy was rapidly smothered by BBC's bland bureaucracy.

> "Dear
>
> Thank you for your letter of . . . about the BBC's decision not to broadcast the television film, **The War Game.** I have been asked to reply . . ."

With the appearance of all too sweet reasonableness, the letter explains the many reasons why the film could not be shown. In summation, it states, "The BBC has, therefore, reluctantly decided that, because of its nature, this film cannot be broadcast. No matter how late at night it was screened, and whatever warnings might be given before the showing, we could not be certain that the audience would not include some for whom its horrors would have reached the point of danger."

Near the end of **Privilege,** an official is asked if the film's disgraced hero, Steven Shorter, will ever again appear on television. He replies crisply that Shorter will not be given another opportunity to "misuse his position of privilege to disturb the public mind". The phrase is more to the point but the style is familiar!

Privilege, then, is almost certainly Watkins' response to the scandal of **The War Game**, the venting of his frustrations, the exorcising of his helpless complicity in the suppression of a truth that might have been instrumental in the saving of millions of lives. But whereas **Privilege** might have gained immense power and vitality from Watkins' passion, in fact this passion far outstrips the rather silly mechanics and heavy-handed, naive symbolism of his allegory and leaves them all the more dramatically exposed.

To begin with, **Privilege** is travelling a well trodden path. Kazan's **A Face in the Crowd**, despite concessions to melodrama, treated a similar theme more successfully, and earlier. And there was, too, **The Great Man** and others. So **Privilege** has a strong overtone of **déjà vu.**

But, more than this, it simply is not credible. Even given that all things in the future are possible, they still have to convince, to give the feeling of likeliness. And **Privilege** falls down again and again in this respect.

Privilege is structurally similar to **The War Game** and employs the same range of techniques — combinations of conventional drama, interviews, commentary, etc. But it differs from the earlier film in its continuing involvement with a handful of people. Watkins' BBC films are made up of snippets of briefly seen faces, snatches of dialogue, official statements, terse interviews. So that there is no need for developing characterisations; nor is there demanded of the performers — most of them non-professionals — the skill to create and sustain a fictitious personality. Their brief utterances are stamped with authenticity; in most cases, after all, they are simply being themselves. They appear, we believe them; they disappear. And if, occasionally, we don't believe in them, it doesn't matter too much because within a few seconds we have forgotten them.

In **Privilege**, where he leans much more heavily on his actors, Watkins is served badly by most of them. Only Jean Shrimpton and Max Bacon approach conviction. The remainder, in their apparent improvisations, too often give impressions of third rate actors. And Paul Jones fails utterly to create or communicate a convincing personality.

All this despite obvious attempts at authenticity. Watkins has studied closely the NFB's Paul Anka film, **Lonely Boy**. He reproduces in detail two specific scenes. And he has less successfully staged his climactic sequence in the style of Leni Riefenstahl's record of the nazi Nuremberg Rally.

But it all lacks bite and the wit that Dick Lester, for instance, brings to his anti-establishment anarchies.

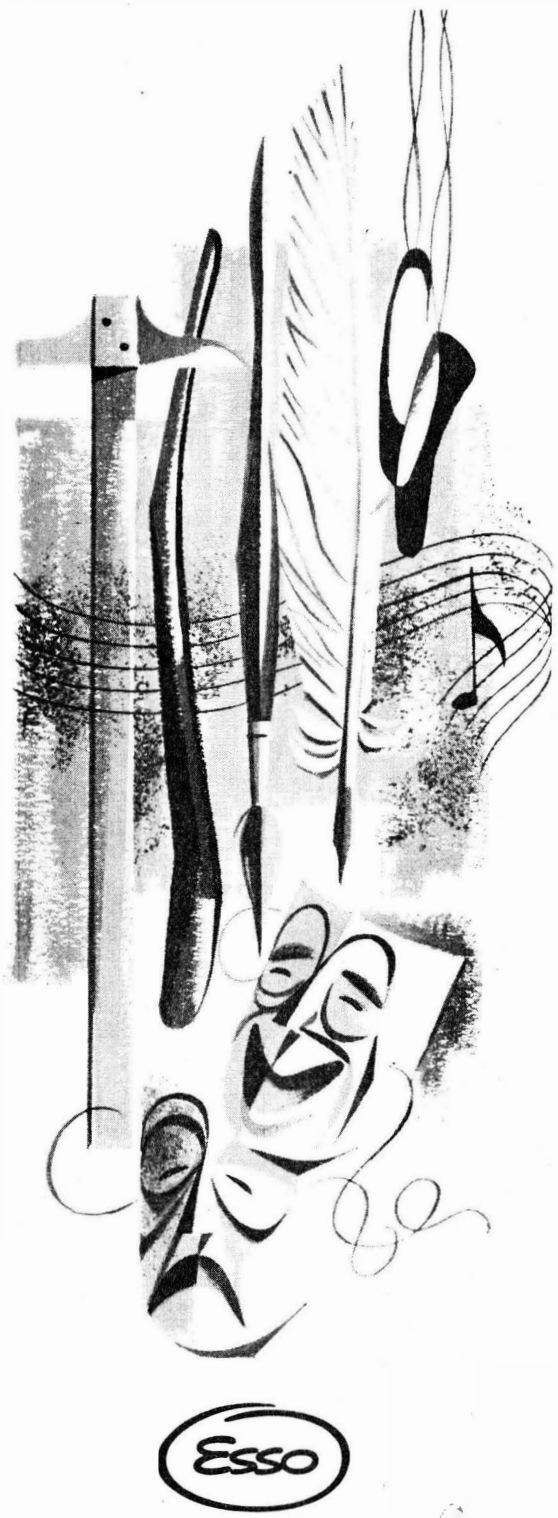
However, despite its overwhelming faults, **Privilege** remains fascinating for its spectacle and for its intriguing structure. It is a compelling failure.

Bruce Martin

THE WHISPERERS

Written for the screen and directed by Bryan Forbes. Cast: Edith Evans, Eric Portman, Nanette Newman. A United Artists release. Black & white. Ratio: 1.85 to 1.

I like to think that I am as firm an admirer of Dame Edith Evans as that great lady has. In the theatre, her Nurse in **Romeo and Juliet**, her Countess in **The Dark is Light Enough** and Mrs. St. Maugham of **The Chalk Garden** (more of a star part than in the Hayley Mills-inclined movie), these have been highlights of past English playgoing. Since her film debut, improbably made at the age of 60 in 1948, we've had a chance to see her crafty art and artful craft enlivening films as underrated as **Young Cassidy** and as overblown as **Tom Jones.** Now, at last comes a full-fledged central part, in Bryan Forbes' brave and affecting film, **The Whisperers.** This is a magnificent performance, for which the winning of an Oscar would be merely damnation with extremely faint praise. The remarkable thing is that, after a reel or two, Margaret Ross doesn't seem to be a performance at all. For a while one can detect the great actress going common. There is a hint of "a handbag!" in the intonation, when her son says she has confetti in her hair and she enquires — "confetti?" But real life is soon firmly established, as both acting and film-making show themselves not afraid to be depressing, even frightening, with no



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attempt made at anything like catharsis.

Bryan Forbes has received short critical shrift for most of his work, especially in England, so **The Whisperers** deserves some promotion from anybody able to see the wood for the trees. The sad, seedy setting of this present world of old age, chilblains and delusion is thoroughly and almost physically conveyed — most especially in the strange, fatalistic sequence involving another priceless actress, the savage Avis Bunnage. It's true that the few "action" moments (complete with music by John Barry at his more mundane) stick out a bit and remind us how desperately uncommercial the rest of the picture is. Even so, they have a point which is being overlooked. They remind us that Mrs. Ross is removed from life and sealed off from daily bustle, protected grotesquely even from violence.

Salutations, then, to Bryan Forbes — and his backers — for going against the current grain and making a film with emotion instead of gimmicks. Let's allow them their car chase. I'm not even too concerned about the way they inappropriately build up Edith Evans on the posters as some kind of Shameless Old Lady. "She's not young, not glamorous, she's been around, she's beautiful." On that last point, at least, they and I are in complete accord.

Clive Denton

HIGH

Production: Larry Kent Productions. Direction and screenplay, Larry Kent; camera, Paul Charles Van der Linden; music by The Sidetrack. Cast; Lanny Beckman, Astri Thorvik, Peter Mathews and Dennis Payne.

If there is a paradise for perky bird-watchers, Larry Kent will be chief shaman. Year after undaunted year, he comes up with yet another bulletin from the aviary, scathed and scowling and grey with droppings, only to see his copy filed away under miscellaneous.

Such wry bravery suggests roots in anomia rather than anomie. Yet Kent's difficulty is not that he can't, but that he won't remember the names of things. To critics and audiences alike, this failure to pay his spiritual dues to concensus culture must seem like sheer ingratitude. Both **Bitter Ash** and **Sweet Substitute,** having been seen all the way home by the more generous-minded reviewers, turned on their benefactors and bit them — by trying to say more than any straight randy film should have a right to say. **When Tomorrow Dies** blew the whistle on what every hard-nosed rationalist took to be God's own Freudian truth — it had the gall to opine that love is **not** all you need. And so to **High,** Kent's latest angular stare at the bird-cage. This time it's Youth that gets itself ungilded, as unrewarding a task in the popularity polls as, say, attacking Bobby Kennedy.

Such unpropitious and hazardous voyaging is not helped by an unsteady hand at the helm. One can readily understand that Kent's encounters with the perils of nay-saying may have resulted in a loss of nerve. At any rate, the attempts at a falsely-realized lyricism — the predictable stopped frames and slow-downs and so forth — are an unnecessary embarrassment. Genuflections to the little household gods must be carried out with style if they're to be carried out at all; and unbelievers like Kent must insist on the courage of their own lack of conviction.

Given the three-month rush job that delivered **High** to the Quebec Censor Board — which promptly banned it for Montreal Film Festival audiences and critics — the film does have considerable merit. There are moments when Kent's unfashionable analysis of hippiedom reifies into something rich and horrible. Astri Thorvik, the beautiful girl person, pulling and patting and plucking eternally at her hair in front of the mirror, Lanny Beckman's cold calling of the shots in a homosexual's apartment, the itching, worrying quality of city streets, are memorable testament to Kent's bleak etching of a society deep in spiritual winter. And the final murder — which I take to have as many implications as it might — of a nice, straight guy fallen among thieves, is surely entirely credible. They're young, they're in love, and they kill people. Right?

As for the censorship decision, it's not immediately obvious why **High** got filed this time. Other films at the Montreal Festival seem to have been allowed to sprout breasts and whatnots with comparative abandon. What they had going for them, however, was the Guardians' reluctance to become involved in international incidentry. Which suggests that we waste no more goodwill in trying to understand the vagaries of the censors. The point is to beat them. As soon as possible. **Warrendale** is banned in Manitoba, **Ulysses** will not be shown uncut in Montreal. The morality squad recently mounted an Expo stage to haul off the entire cast of a company engaged in act three of their play. Escalation is in the wind.

Patrick MacFadden

THE TRIP

Producer and Director: Roger Corman. Screenplay: Jack Nicholson. Photography: Arch Dalzell. Cast: Peter Fonda, Susan Strasberg, Bruce Dern, Selli Sachse. Released by American International.

Like the Edsel, Roger Corman's **The Trip** was **designed** to succeed. Production values: Peter Fonda (who now seems to share his sister's conviction about acting: when in doubt, disrobe); the double-breasted subjects of sex and LSD; special effects stolen at random from every major underground film of the last five years. The result isn't exactly a middle-earth masterpiece; more like a poor man's **Juliet of the Spirits** with acid indigestion.

The Wild Angels was Corman's version of **Scorpio Rising.** Imitations are not contemptible, necessarily (as La Rochefoucauld pointed out, they occasionally reveal what was silly or mediocre in the originals). But Corman's version was, if anything, more superficial than the original. In **The Trip** he borrows the single-frame editing of Gregory Markopoulos, the romantic and sinister images from Kenneth Anger's **Inauguration of the Pleasure Dome,** and the special effects developed by Harry Smith in **Early Abstractions** and the USCO experiments recorded by Jud Yalkut in **Turn, Turn, Turn.** In the process, Corman has prompted critics to extravagantly praise his "originality" — only because **they** haven't seen the originals! It is a transparently uninspired film — with no mind of his own in the present instance, Corman doesn't even know what to do with his thefts.

Having chosen a dangerous structure — the plotless, stream-of-consciousness technique — Corman proceeds to fall into every pitfall imaginable. There is no distinctive colour-logic at work in the film; the effects he uses do not build organically in subtlety or complication — instead he uses them willy-nilly, repeats them at random, unable to control the effects, unable to use them in a disciplined fashion. The music is peculiarly vapid for a "drug" picture, and almost never synchronizes with any image on the screen. The dialogue wouldn't even pass a Standard Hollywood I.Q. test. It is bad enough that some of the "middleground" distributors in North America are demonstrably guilty of mistreating "underground" filmmakers, but Roger Corman has discovered a new way of exploiting their work. If you like **The Trip,** you'll love the real McCoy.

John Hofsess

CREDITS

Richard Ballentine is a well-known filmmaker, among whose films are **Mr. Pearson** and (with Gordon Sheppard) **The Most.** He produced the series "This Land is People" for CTV and worked six years for the CBC.

Jay Cocks, film reviewer for a large American magazine, is a regular contributor to TAKE ONE.

Bob Cowan is a New York filmmaker.

Clive Denton is a regular contributor to TAKE ONE.

Graham Fraser, in his last year of an Honours B.A. in Modern History at the University of Toronto, is editor of The Review, a weekly supplement in the university's student paper.

Anne Hirmo, who created this issue's cover, is a young Montreal-based freelance designer.

John Hofsess, underground filmmaker, is a regular contributor to TAKE ONE.

Antony Lorraine is a Canadian filmmaker and critic.

Patrick MacFadden, TAKE ONE Associate Editor, is currently enjoying an extended stay in Canada through the good offices of the U.S. Department of Immigration.

Bruce Martin, filmmaker and film systems consultant, is a regular contributor to TAKE ONE.

Donna McDonald, a Canadian, now lives in Athens, where she and her husband are freelance writers and broadcasters.

Michel Projer, illustrator of "Dimitrios the Greek", is a French geologist who has lived in Greece for the last three years.

Michael Rubbo, a young Australian-born film director with an interest in children's films, is now at the National Film Board.

Robert Russel is a regular contributor to TAKE ONE.

FEED BACK

I have a few words. First, either send me your magazine at about the same time (before is too much to ask, I know) it hits the newsstands, or cancel my subscription. Today is Sept. 18/67 and, not having received Vol. 1 No. 6 yet, I went out and bought it. I got nervous seeing it on magazine racks for three weeks.

Second, a message for John Hofsess. John, for God's sake write a novel or something. Your series becomes increasingly reminiscent of Hugh Hefner's Playboy Philosophy. Also, don't tell lies. Your paragraph beginning "In speaking with other Canadian film-makers and distributors . . ." and ending with " . . . it is my vision of hell" deliberately ignores the many hours of useless conversation which were also reminiscent of Hugh Hefner's Playboy Philosophy. Also, who in God's name (there's God again; must be some connection) ever told you that the Mugwumps were the first to unite rock and folk music? I was listening to folk-rock when Zalman was still sleeping in the fabled laundromat at the corner of St. George and Dupont.

David Cronenberg
(Filmmaker and unacknowledged star of **Black Zero,** etc.)
Toronto 12

A Monsieur Patrick Straram, qui semble avoir une conception si élevée de la critique, j'aimerais rappeler qu'il est une décence élémentaire au bon critique: c'est, tout simplement, de dire à l'objet d'une attaque aussi virulente que la sienne (TAKE ONE, juin, page 34) la raison de celle-ci. On risque, sinon, de descendre au niveau du pamphlétarisme politique qui n'a d'autre valeur, comme chacun sait, que d'enflammer des ressentiments inutiles.

Je voudrais enfin faire remarquer à Monsieur Straram que la première fonction du critique est de parler en connaissance de cause. Ses remarques sur l'avant-dernière phrase de ma lettre laissent croire qu'il n'en a guère compris le calembour (et, partant, l'humour) central.

Mark Blandford
Montreal

Interesting, Don Owen's observations (TAKE ONE, Vol. 1 No. 6) — but misplaced, his admiration of Godard "for opening **Vivre Sa Vie** by shooting a scene from the back of the characters — **you never see their faces**" (emphasis is my own).

Look, during the scene, into the mirror behind the counter, and you'll see Karina's face — the setup very carefully arranged so we see her but not her husband; a contrived sort of affair set up not "because he felt like doing it" but, perhaps, because he wanted to copy that old Hollywood bit . . .

Don B. Klugman
Chicago

NEW YORK LETTER

by Bob Cowan

The following are a few of the more recent films I have seen.

Bardo Follies by George Landow is **the** film about film — the very substance of film material, chemicals, texture — the image is only part of the totality. The basic image of the film (constantly repeated) is of a girl waving to a boat-load of people. The picture becomes fuzzy, machine-like, split into several smaller copies, slowly becoming dimmer, blobbier, finally decomposing into small bubbles of film substance — the image gone long ago. The effect, with the film presented on a wide screen, is one of not watching a film at all, but rather some kind of natural organic process.

There are several filmmakers who make what I call "footage films." The average home-movie maker shoots this kind of undisciplined, aimless film, except that the home movie enthusiast never claims to be making "art" but is simply recording events for their sentimental and nostalgic value. The "Underground" filmmakers who, for the main part, work this way and are successful, are very few. Most of them have no point of view, no sense of filmic structure and very little awareness of the filmic potential of the subject matter they are gazing at. The end results are usually mindless journeys of self-indulgent tedium. The films of Warren Sonnbert fall into this category (at least everything he's done so far). On the other hand, Charles Henri Ford, the poet, in his first film (with assistance from Warhol, Vanderbeek and others) has produced a "footage" film of great excitement and beauty. **Poem Posters** was filmed at the Cordier and Ekstrom Gallery in New York at the opening of Charles Henri Ford's photo-collage exhibition. The film is edited with a sure sense of rhythm.

Stan Brakhage's **23rd Psalm Branch,** an 8mm film about 2 hours long, is a brilliant tour de force of rhythmic cutting and single-frame imagery which eventually wears thin and becomes nothing more than an exercise in technique. Social comment is turned into home-movie banalities.

Circus Notebooks, a new film by Jonas Mekas, is the best film he has made to date. It is a poetic tribute, not only to circus performers, but also to a time when, as children, we sat in awe of everything that took place under the big tent. Acts pass by at furious, kaleidoscopic, speed, melting into one another, changing colors into rainbow explosions. Stop-action, double exposures and other effects blend into one glorious tapestry of visual orchestration.

Next issue: An interview with Underground film star Donna Kerness.

BOOKS

"How Sweet It Was. Television: A Pictorial Commentary" by Arthur Shulman and Roger Youman. Shorecrest, 450 pps., $12.50.

Looking through the 1453 photographs (count 'em) which make up most of "How Sweet It Was" is rather like looking through an album full of snapshots of distant relatives. Somehow, many of the people in this book — from Dinah Shore and Jack Webb to Adam West and Mia Farrow — have become more than a memory. Through constant, monotonous exposure on an electronic tube in the middle of our home, they're now just like one of the family.

So here they are. No stars, not even many celebrities. Just 1453 distant relatives, cathode spirits preserved for all time in an album commemorating torpid hours after a hard day's work. For the buff, the trivia expert, the student of popular culture, "How Sweet It Was" is indispensable. Go ahead: name the four actors who played Ellery Queen on TV; the program that, whatever you do, you shouldn't miss the first 60 seconds of; the actress who played Mr. Peepers's wife; the 1952 sitcom that starred Jack Lemmon; the "pixie ballerina" who assisted Florian ZaBach. It is undeniably an amusing parlor game, ideal for those frequent occasions when there's nothing good on TV.

"Nothing good" on TV. The authors (or should we say compilers) of this hefty, all-embracing volume, with their apparent eagerness to mention everyone who appeared in front of a television camera during the past 20 years, would call that heresy, snobbishness. All TV programs seem good to them, or, if not good, then interesting, vital in some obscure way to a proper appraisal of the medium's history.

Yet I'm grateful to Shulman and Youman for this book, glad that they sat down and took the time to paste up the family album and get it in shape. Never mind about the writing; even the absence of any true "commentary" can be forgiven, for we can each of us supply our own. It's the photos that matter, the only true physical evidence remaining that such programs as "The Ernie Kovacs Show" and "Playhouse 90" did really exist. No tapes were made in those days, and kinoscopes were a rarity; all we have are these pictures and our memories. Selectivity and critical analysis become insignificant; in such books, nostalgia is supreme.

But are the sub-cultural relics betokened of each of the 1453 photographs really worth thinking about? Does television deserve this or any kind of retrospective consideration? Are these memories truly worth reviving? If they are taken precisely as memories, and valued for what they are more than what they recall, then the answer must be yes. Turning the pages of "How Sweet It Was," reacquainting oneself with all those familiar faces, is a sobering and necessary experience. If Shulman and Youman wanted only to trigger a flow of nostalgic recollection, they have succeeded admirably. But they fail to understand that these memories, amusing as they may be, are fundamentally empty, that a dwelling on such memory implies a certain kind of emotional and intellectual bankruptcy. The luxury of "How Sweet It Was" is the blissful leisure of memory itself, its tragedy that television should so thoroughly be a case of "a poor thing but mine own." All of ours, really. And that is the most sobering thought of all.

JAY COCKS

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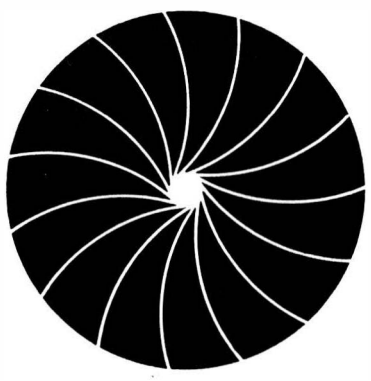

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IN THE WORKS

DIRECTOR	TITLE	STARS	STORY	MISC. INFORMATION
Rudolf Krejcik	—	—	—	1 hr. colour film about Canada to be shown in Czech theatres. Now being shot.
Gilles Carle	Le Viol d'Une Jeune Fille Douce	Andrée Lachapelle Jacques Cohen Catherine Mousseau Daniel Pilon Donald Pilon Suzan Kay André Gagnon	—	Colour. In editing stage; to be released in about two months.
Gilles Groulx	Chant Premier	Georges Dor Christian Bernard and Mouffe	Drama about popular music in Quebec.	Colour 35mm. Presently being edited.
Raymond Garceau	Le Grand Rock	Francine Racette Guy Thauvette	Drama about an immigrant from the country who, trying to adjust to urban life, turns to crime.	Colour 35mm. Presently being edited.
Jacques Giraldeau	Gros-Morne	—	Documentary about poverty in the Gaspé.	Colour 16mm. 1 hr. To be released to TV in about two months.
Jacques Leduc	Nominingue	—	The impact of tourism on a small Laurentian town.	Colour 16mm. Presently being edited.
Jean-Pierre Lefebvre	Mon Amie Pierrette	—	Drama with non-actors. A teenager visits her friend's country house.	Colour 16 mm. 90 min. Presently being edited.
Jean-Pierre Lefebvre	Comment Gagner la Guerre Contre Les Américains	—	—	Script just completed. Shooting (colour 35mm) may start around Christmas.
Jean-Pierre Lefebvre	Mon Oeil	—	Violence and our society.	B & W 16mm. 3 hrs. Sound editing in progress.
Jacques Godbout	Mini	—	Drama about our mini youth.	B & W 16mm. 90 min. Shooting just completed.
Marcel Carrière	Un Jour d'Un Ete	—	Dramatised documentary about slum-raised girl trying to break out.	Colour 16mm. Presently being shot.
Clément Perron & Georges Dufaux	Ce N'est Pas La Faute de Jacques Cartier	Jacques Desrosiers Michelle Chicoine	Comedy about American tourists visiting Quebec.	Colour 16mm. 90 mins. Completed. Due for release shortly.
James B. Clark	My Side of the Mountain	Theodore Bikel Ted Eccles Frank Perry Peggi Loder	Children's film about a boy living on his own in the Laurentians.	Shot in Toronto & Knowlton (PQ) with half-British half-Canadian crew and all-Canadian cast (exc. TB & TE). Paramount
David Gardner	The Paper People	Marigold Charlesworth Mark Strange Kate Reid	Story of an artist who burns life-size paper people.	Colour. 90 min. To be shown on CBC December 13.
Larry Kent	—	—	University drama.	Script being written. Shooting in November. $25,000 budget

Most of the films listed are either being made at the NFB or through the NFB. Most of these films, obviously, will not get theatrical distribution and are destined for one showing as a TV special, but all must technically be considered feature film because they are at least one hour in length (most are the standard, theatrical 90 minutes in length). Obviously, if the TV-product is good enough, it could conceivably receive theatrical distribution and be entered in festivals.

It is interesting to note the large output of French-language films in relation to those in English. This is largely due to the requirements of local French television. Were it not for the ready availability of the packaged product from the south, one would like to think that English-Canadian filmmakers would be in a better situation. There cannot be said to be any tradition of feature filmmaking in Canada, but there is a very real tradition of documentary filmmaking at the National Film Board and it is interesting to note that the French feature filmmakers are building on this. If not actual documentaries, their films use documentary-type material and techniques. It is from such roots that the British "new wave" sprang and it is probable that, if Canada is to develop a distinctive national cinema, films such as those listed above will be regarded as the beginnings.

The list (the first attempted in this country) is necessarily incomplete and inaccurate. I would appreciate being notified of errors and omissions.

Ronald Blumer

THE BEST OF SECTER

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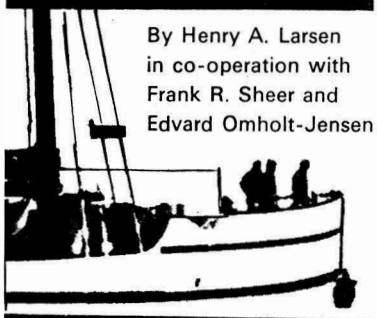
THE BIG SHIP

By Henry A. Larsen
in co-operation with
Frank R. Sheer and
Edvard Omholt-Jensen



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a tale of heroism
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MISC.

The Royal Film Archive of Belgium has just produced a bibliography of books and periodicals, published before 1914, which are in the possession of the members of the International Federation of Film Archives. The list includes old books on physics and optics, manufacturers' catalogues of instruments, books on chinese shadows, magazines devoted to magic lanterns, etc. — anything published prior to 1914 with any relationship to the cinema. The catalogue (94 pages) can be obtained by sending $5.00 (US) to the Union Bank of Switzerland, Bahnhofstrasse 45, Zurich (Account number 408-526-30 Z of the F.I.A.F.), mentioning the Bibliography of books before 1914.

* * *

A National Film Board warehouse on the outskirts of Montreal burned to the ground last summer, takingwith it something like 1,000,000 feet of nitrate-base film (belonging to the Canadian Film Institute and the Cinémathèque Canadienne as well as the NFB). Among the footage lost were films dating back to 1914.

* * *

Late in September, while attempting to film poverty conditions in the mountains of Kentucky, Hugh O'Conner was shot and killed. O'Connor, 46 years old, joined the National Film Board in 1952. Most recently, he had collaborated with Colin Low and Roman Kroiter on Labyrinth for Expo '67.

CLIVE DENTON ON FILM

Fame has come at last. If happiness is having your own library card, prestige is being ripped to pieces in the letters column of TAKE ONE. And being, perhaps, more masochistic than our editor, I would like to quote from a bombshell that was not printed, as follows:—

"I simply couldn't believe my eyes when I read Clive Denton's review of **Au Hasard Balthazar.** For your information gentlemen, **Balthazar** just happens to be the best film of 1966 and for your reviewer to treat the film in such an offhand manner ("I could no more analyse **Au Hasard Balthazar** than fly in the air...") shows an incredible lack of responsibility on your part. "For the price of an admission I would be quite willing (and able) to do justice to this film (or any other), the next time your reviewer is similarly indisposed."

Nika Rylski,
Montreal, P.Q.

"Offhand"? or would you believe humble? Anyway, the ability to do justice to every film is no doubt admirable but way beyond me. I warm more to Mr. Harris, part of whose letter was printed. He wrote in kid gloves and showed as much appreciation of Bresson as courtesy to me. Just his last sentence puzzles me: "As a donkey has only a small donkey brain to communicate with Bresson personifies it in Schubert's Sonata no. 20." Wasn't Schubert a genius? Or is the point in the use of solo piano rather than an orchestra? Probably the latter, but you see how easy it is to be not quite clear and therefore misunderstood.

George Patterson's views make sense as usual (if I may be so patronising), although I do think the difficulties of great artists at M.G.M. are at least as significant as their employment there. However, I had no desire to attack M.G.M. invidiously. It just strikes me that "Ars Gratia Artis" is a phony motto for any big business studio.

★★★★★★★★★★★★★

Because of the rapid proliferation of columns within the still-limiting confines of the back pages of TAKE ONE, columnists will not henceforward be appearing in every issue of the magazine. The writers get more time and the readers more variety.

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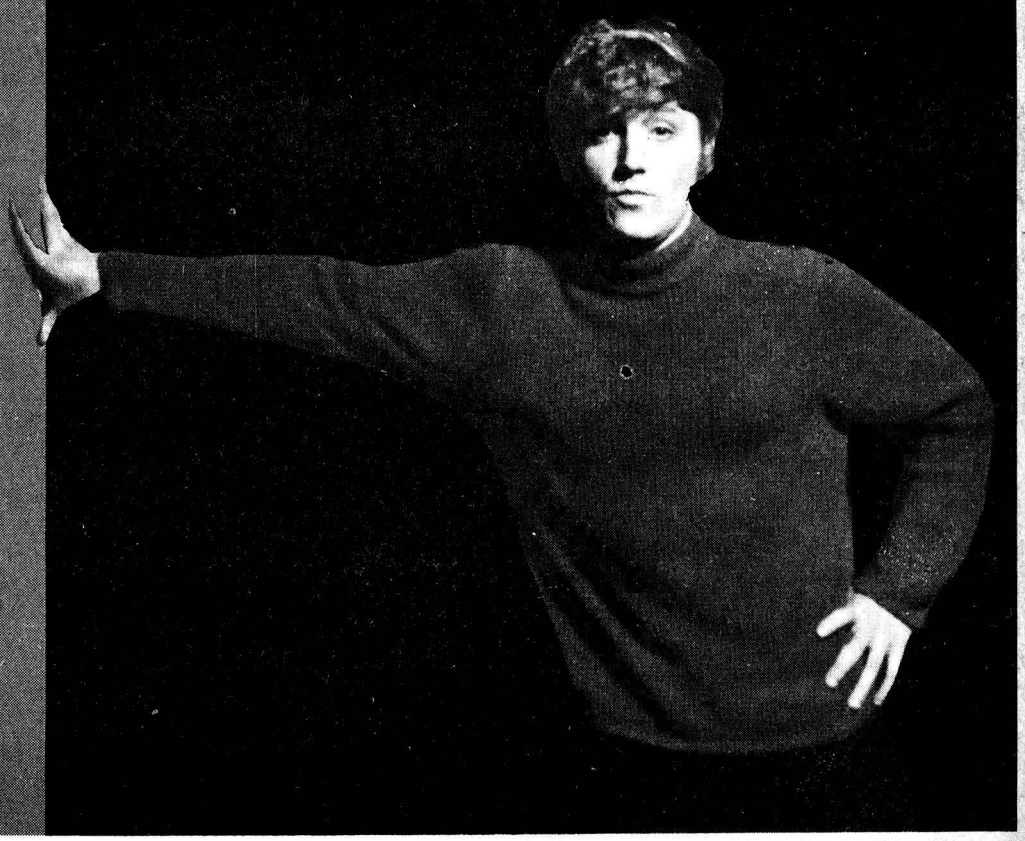
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